

## INSPECTION REPORT

### **BUCKINGHAM SCHOOL**

Buckingham

LEA area: Buckinghamshire

Unique reference number: 110484

Headteacher: Mr K Panes

Reporting inspector: Mrs J Murray  
1606

Dates of inspection: 18 – 22 November 2002

Inspection number: 249815

Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Modern – non-selective

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11-18

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: London Road  
Buckingham

Postcode: MK18 1AT

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Appropriate authority: Governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr M King

Date of previous inspection: 10 February 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
1606	Mrs J Murray	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it? The school's results and achievements. How well are students taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
9724	Mrs B Quest Ritson	Lay inspector		Students' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school care for its students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
2740	Mrs B Barratt	Team inspector	Citizenship Geography Special educational needs Educational inclusion including race equality	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students.
27058	Ms K Cannon	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
22780	Mr D Custance	Team inspector	Science	
10560	Mr D Gutmann	Team inspector	Health and social care Leisure and tourism	
1604	Mrs J Head	Team inspector	Mathematics	
25746	Mr R Moyle	Team inspector	Physical education	
15576	Mr D Nebesnuick	Team inspector	History Business education	
20124	Ms J Peach	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
8360	Mr F Peacock	Team inspector	Music	
	Mr J Richards	Team inspector	Art and design	
1578	Ms M Sinclair	Team inspector	6 <sup>th</sup> form information and communication technology Religious education	
2079	Mr T Slack	Team inspector	Design and technology	
4486	Mr M Weller	Team inspector	English English as an additional language	

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Buckingham School is a designated secondary modern school for boys and girls aged 11 to 18. With 1114 pupils on roll, it is larger than other schools nationally. The numbers on roll have increased by 27 per cent over the last five years due to the change of age of transfer from primary schools and natural growth within the area. Pupils are from mixed socio-economic backgrounds with about six per cent who are entitled to free school meals; this is below average. The school serves the town of Buckingham and its surrounding villages for those pupils who are not selected for a grammar school place. Approximately 40 per cent of the highest-attaining pupils are streamed off and thus attainment on entry is below that nationally. Around 26 per cent have special educational needs and four per cent are supported by a Statement of Special Educational Needs; both these figures are above average. Needs include emotional and behavioural, complex and moderate learning difficulties. Less than one per cent of pupils speak English as an additional language, which is low. Just over two thirds of pupils move into further education at age 16, with about 70 pupils each year who enter the school's sixth form.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

Buckingham School is an inclusive school that operates at a satisfactory level. It is now fully staffed with specialist teachers but previous recruitment difficulties affected pupils' learning and progress. Standards are average, but above average compared to other secondary modern schools. Teaching is satisfactory overall with a significant proportion that is good. Pastoral care and guidance are good with a very good range of extra-curricular activities that contributes very well to pupils' experiences. Overall, leadership and management are satisfactory with many aspects that are good. As the school has been working beyond its budget allocation without raising standards, it currently gives unsatisfactory value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- Good monitoring procedures have increased the proportion of lessons that are at least good; consequently pupils' learning is improving.
- Good pastoral support and care builds pupils' self-confidence and self-esteem.
- Very good procedures for staff development that induct, train and support staff well.
- A comprehensive personal and social education programme and a very good range of activities outside lessons benefit many pupils.
- Very good careers education and guidance helps prepare pupils for the transition to work or further education.

#### **What could be improved**

- Boys' attainment throughout the school and the overall trend of improvement in test and examination results.
- Standards in modern foreign languages.
- The development of information and communication technology skills in all subjects.
- The attitudes and behaviour of a small number of pupils who disrupt the learning of other pupils.
- Financial control so that the school operates within its budget allocation.

*The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.*

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

The school has made satisfactory progress since it was inspected in February 1997. Good development has taken place in three of the of the four key issues identified at that time. The school now has very good procedures to support staff development and monitor teachers' work. Hence, teaching has improved and is now more challenging and better matched to pupils' needs. All pupils have targets and academic monitoring procedures are generally effective. The school has worked very hard to improve pupils' behaviour but there remain small numbers in most classes that enjoy exhibiting anti-social and difficult behaviour; these pupils require very firm handling. Some middle managers are new and others have developed their skills so that the quality of the management of subjects, pastoral work and special educational needs is now good. The fourth issue of ensuring that a daily act of collective worship takes

place and teaching religious education in the sixth form has not been dealt with. The trend of improvement in test results at the end of Year 9 has been in line with that nationally but it has been below for GCSE results. In an attempt to keep class numbers under 30 pupils and the teacher-pupil ratio as it is, the school's budget has been overspent each year since 1998. The impact of these measures, and the improvement to the quality of teaching, has been dissipated by difficulties in recruiting teachers in previous years. Whilst overall pupils' achievements are satisfactory, many boys could do better. The governing body, the headteacher and other managers want to bring about further improvements and have the capacity to do so but they will need to implement the budget recovery plan in an imaginative way and agree the future direction of the school if they are to be successful.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 11 and sixth form students at the end of Year 13 based on average point scores in GCSE and A-level/AS-level examinations.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2001
GCSE examinations	C	C	N/A	B
A-levels/AS-levels	N/A	E	N/A	

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

Similar schools are those designated as secondary modern schools. At the time of writing, comparative data was not available for 2002 for all schools nationally or for secondary modern schools.

Over the past four years, the trend of improvement in the Year 9 national tests has been similar to that for all schools nationally. In 2002, results for English, mathematics and science were below average in comparison with all schools nationally. These were lower in 2002 than in 2001 when results were similar to all schools nationally. There is little difference between the three subjects except that boys' results in English are well below those nationally and also below their results in mathematics and science. Compared to their attainment on entry in Year 7, pupils make satisfactory progress through to Year 11 and achieve as might be expected.

In 2002, the proportion of pupils attaining 5+ A\* to C grades in the GCSE examinations was lower than in the previous year, when results were below those nationally but above those for similar schools. However, results for five or more A\* to G grades and one or more A\* to G grades showed a slight improvement. The trend of improvement since 1997 has been below that nationally. The proportion of boys who gain five or more A\* to G grades is well below that nationally and also that of girls in the school. In English and science, girls significantly outperformed boys; in mathematics, there are no significant differences. National statistical data, used to determine relative overall success within GCSE subjects, shows that in 2001 pupils did better in drama, business education and design and technology than in their other subjects; they did least well in French and Spanish and geography.

Standards in the sixth form are well below average for AS and A-level examinations and slightly above those nationally for AVCE examinations. Considering that students enter the sixth form with relatively low GCSE scores, many do well to complete courses and results show that achievement is satisfactory.

Standards of work seen during the inspection were below average overall. Standards are similar to the national average in business education, drama, music, physical education and religious education. Standards of literacy and numeracy are below average with a particular weakness in writing; the school has recognized this and is working to improve this aspect of literacy. Pupils' learning is satisfactory overall and their progress over time leads to satisfactory achievement in almost all subjects. Standards and achievement are well below average in French and Spanish. The school has set challenging targets for itself; in 2002, these were not met.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
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Attitudes to the school	Satisfactory. Most pupils like the school and are attentive in lessons. They eagerly participate in extra-curricular provision.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory. The majority of pupils behave well and are considerate to each other. It is only a minority of pupils who behave badly and are disruptive.
Personal development and relationships	Satisfactory. Relationships are good and pupils co-operate well with each other. A minority do not readily accept responsibility or want to work independently.
Attendance	Satisfactory and much improved since the last inspection.

A minority of pupils requires firm management in lessons to behave in an acceptable manner. Behaviour about the school is at times boisterous and noisy but mainly pupils respond well to teachers. Participation rates in extra-curricular provision are good and pupils are responding well to tutorial work designed to improve their self-confidence and social skills.

### TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11	Years 12 – 13
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Good

*Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.*

Overall, teaching is satisfactory with a significant proportion that is good. Teaching is good in English and satisfactory in mathematics and science. Some excellent teaching was seen in English, mathematics, geography and business education. Teaching is better in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11 because extra support is available to manage the challenging behaviour of small groups of pupils; this allows teachers to teach their well-prepared lessons. Teaching is good in the sixth form because tasks and the pace of learning suit students well. Strengths of teaching are planning and teachers' subject knowledge when used with probing questions. Pupils respond and learn well when they are set clear deadlines to complete their work and are fully involved in tasks suited to their needs. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs are taught well when given additional support. Gifted and talented pupils, and those with English as an additional language, receive the same teaching as other pupils; this is satisfactory in helping them to make progress. Weaker aspects of teaching include a lack of consistency in expectations of presentation of pupils' work, marking and the use of homework.

### OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory overall. Good provision is made in Years 7 to 9 with enhancement made through performing arts.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory. Provision stated in Statements of Special Educational Needs is fully met. Additional individual support work is good; they make good progress when additional support for their learning is provided.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory. None of the pupils identified are at an early stage of learning English. They are all fully integrated into lessons, where they learn at the same rate as their peer group.

Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Satisfactory. Social and moral education is good; spiritual and cultural education are satisfactory. There is no school policy and few subjects have considered how to promote pupils' spiritual, moral and social development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. Procedures to monitor and promote behaviour and attendance are good. The school is inclusive and supports all its pupils well.

A broad range of learning opportunities is provided across the school. Strengths lie in the vocational courses available in the sixth form and the good quality education provided through drama, dance and music. The provision for extra-curricular activities and personal and social education is good; that for careers education is very good. Statutory requirements are not fully met for a daily act of collective worship, religious education in the sixth form and some aspects of information and communication technology. Satisfactory arrangements are in place for the school to work with parents but generally, parents' involvement with the school is not extensive.

### HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory overall. Good procedures are in place to monitor and improve teaching. Leadership by middle managers is mainly good. Very good procedures support staff development. The budget deficit is overshadowing future developments.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. Governors are supportive but they have not ensured that all statutory requirements are fully met.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. Monitoring procedures are good, especially for teaching. Other procedures are not always implemented rigorously.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. Specific grants are used appropriately. The school has overspent its allocated budget over several years, but the principles of best value are understood and satisfactorily applied.

At present, the school is in a difficult management position due to its deficit budget. It will require firm and positive leadership by the governing body, headteacher and senior managers to bring it back into a balanced budget. The school is now almost fully staffed with permanent specialist teachers. Learning resources are adequate, but accommodation is good.

### PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their children like the school.</li> <li>• Their children work hard and make progress.</li> <li>• They find the school approachable and it listens to them.</li> <li>• The school provides an interesting range of activities outside of lessons.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The behaviour of a minority of pupils.</li> <li>• The information about how their children are progressing.</li> <li>• Closer working with the school.</li> <li>• Greater consistency in homework.</li> <li>• Leadership and management.</li> </ul>

The inspection team agrees with parents' favourable views of the school. Generally, pupils respond well to what is offered and activities out of lessons are well attended. A small minority of pupils need firm handling as, at times, they spoil the learning of other pupils. Inspectors found that the information parents receive about progress is generally good and that the school tries to work closely with parents, but these efforts are not reciprocated as well as they could be. Inspection findings confirmed parents' views that the quality and regularity of homework are inconsistent. Leadership and management were found to be satisfactory overall with some aspects that were good.

**INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM**

The sixth form currently has 104 students on roll. It is smaller than average but it has grown steadily since 1999, when there were 66 students. Around 30 per cent of pupils from Year 11 continue into the sixth form with few students joining from other schools; some of the highest-attaining students transfer to the grammar school. The sixth form has an open entry policy and does not require that students attain specific grades at GCSE. As in the main school, there are very few pupils who are not from white families. There are very few students with special educational needs; no pupils speak English as an additional language. Attainment on entry varies from year to year but it is much lower than is usual to a school's sixth form because of the school's designation as a secondary modern school. The average GCSE grades are well below average, reflecting the streaming of pupils to the grammar school. Most students follow vocational courses leading to AVCE qualifications; a few students combine these course with a modest range of AS and A-level courses. The proportion moving into further or higher education reflects the needs of the students and is about 30 per cent; about half of the students go into employment.

**HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS**

The school provides well for many students who do not have the necessary GCSE grades to transfer to the grammar school. Alternative further education is some distance away and without the school's provision these students could be lost to education. Within the vocational courses, the school meets the needs of its students well. Standards are slightly above those nationally and pupils' achievements are good. Apart from English, the numbers on AS and A-level courses fluctuate each year and are too small to make comparisons against national standards. Pupils work very hard and very few leave the sixth form before the end of their courses but generally, the standards attained are well below those nationally. Teaching is good and supports students very well in their learning. The daily management of the sixth form is good. The overall leadership is satisfactory; management is based on a set of known principles but, as yet, there is no agreed and written plan for the future of the sixth form and the courses it will offer. Careful attention is given to ensure that it is self-sufficient and not drawing on the main school budget. A change in funding arrangements this year has meant some subsidy but, nevertheless, the sixth form gives satisfactory value for money and is judged to be cost effective.

**Strengths**

- Very good relationships between staff and students motivate students to attend regularly and encourage their keenness to learn.
- Consistently good teaching is enabling students to achieve at least as well as might be expected and often to achieve well.
- Provision of good quality vocational course, with strong community and business links in business education, meets the learning needs of students well.
- The very good guidance and support that students receive prepares them well to make informed choices about their future lives beyond the sixth form.

**What could be improved**

- Future planning that underpins the direction of the sixth form and the courses that it intends to provide.
- Opportunities for students to work independently.
- A planned programme of activities to promote students' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development.

*The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan. Strengths and areas for improvement in individual subjects are identified in the sections on individual subjects in the full report.*

## THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

The table below shows overall judgements about the provision in the subjects and courses that were inspected in the sixth form. Judgements are based mainly on the quality of teaching and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects in the sixth form were inspected.

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	<b>Satisfactory.</b> National comparisons cannot be made because of small numbers. Students are making good progress due to good teaching.
Design and technology	<b>Good.</b> National comparisons cannot be made because of small numbers. Students are achieving well as a result of consistently good teaching.
Business education	<b>Very good.</b> Standards are above average. Achievement is good. Good teaching promotes learning and achievement successfully.
Information and communication technology	<b>Satisfactory.</b> This subject was only introduced last year. Students are making good progress. Teaching is satisfactory.
Physical education	<b>Good.</b> National comparisons cannot be made because of small numbers. Students are making good progress. Teaching is good.
Leisure and recreation	<b>Very good.</b> Students' achievements are good across the range of levels for the subject. Teaching is very good with effective external links.
Health and social care	<b>Very good.</b> Students achieve well. Students develop good communication skills. Teaching is very good.
Art and design	<b>Satisfactory.</b> National comparisons cannot be made because of small numbers. Achievement is satisfactory. Teaching is satisfactory.
English	<b>Good.</b> Standards are below those nationally but students achieve in line with their attainment on entry to the course. Teaching is good.

Work was also sampled in drama, geography, history, theatre studies and the key skills course. Teaching is good in all these subjects; in the lessons seen, it was very good in drama and theatre studies. Pupils' achievement overall is good; they are making good progress due to the good teaching and support they receive.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Good support and guidance is given to students. Induction procedures are in place but do not prepare students thoroughly enough to work independently. Assessment procedures are satisfactory. Careers education is very good.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Satisfactory overall. The sixth form is effective in providing a suitable range of courses for its students. Courses are well led and managed. Daily management is good and promotes positive attitudes to attendance and learning.

## STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They enjoy their courses.</li> <li>• The respect and value their teachers.</li> <li>• The guidance given to them.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More involvement in the main school.</li> <li>• A longer induction period to settle them into sixth form working.</li> </ul>

Inspectors found that relationships are very good in the sixth form and students gain great help and support from teachers' interest in them. The induction period could include further work on study skills

and prepare students more fully for independent working. Activities are organized for the sixth form and students make a very good contribution to organizing events for the main school such as basketball and talent competitions. At present, they do not have official responsibilities towards younger pupils.

### **COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES**

*Inspectors make judgements about provision in subjects and courses, and about leadership and management, in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. Excellent and very good are equivalent to the judgement "outstanding" in further education and sixth form college reports; poor and very poor are equivalent to "very weak".*

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and pupils' achievements**

1. Buckingham School is a designated secondary modern school within a fully selective system. Comparisons are made within this report to all secondary schools nationally and also to other modern schools. As yet, comparative data for secondary modern schools is not available for 2002 and therefore comparisons cannot be made either for Year 9 or Year 11.
2. Attainment on entry is below average. The school does not take in the full ability range as between 35 to 45 per cent of higher-attaining pupils each year are creamed off to attend the grammar school. The spread of attainment is therefore limited to the average and below average range. At entry in Year 7, the standards attained by boys and girls are similar in mathematics and science. In English, pupils' standards of writing are well below those nationally. The standard of boys' writing and reading is well below average, which has an impact on boys' learning, and the standards they attain, throughout the school.
3. In the national tests taken at the end of Year 9, the overall trend of improvement has been similar to that for all secondary schools nationally over the past four years. Results for English and mathematics have been above those of other secondary modern schools whilst science results have been similar. The results for all three subjects were lower in 2002 than in 2001, reflecting the disruption to learning caused by staffing difficulties when these pupils were in Year 8. Comparison with pupils' Year 6 national test scores on entry show that they attained the levels expected of them and have thus made satisfactory progress in Years 7 to 9, achieving as they should. In English, results have varied over the last five years with a big dip to well below average in 2000. Boys' standards are well below those of girls. In mathematics, results have also varied each year with no consistent trend of improvement or any significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. The pattern in science is similar to that of mathematics but after a gradual decline in results there was a slightly more marked trend of improvement.
4. For the past five years, the average points score obtained by pupils in GCSE examinations has been in line with that for all secondary schools. The proportion of pupils gaining at least five passes at grade C or above has been below that nationally but similar to that of other secondary modern schools; boys' results are well below those nationally and well below those of girls in the school. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more grades A\* to G has been above that of all schools nationally and of other secondary modern schools. Since 1997, the overall trend of improvement has been below that nationally. Compared to their National Curriculum test results at the end of Year 9, pupils' achievements were just satisfactory in English, mathematics and science.
5. The attainment of students at the end of Year 11 in 2002 fell short of the challenging targets set by the school; this is attributed to the severe staffing shortages and difficulties that affected pupils' learning and progress in Year 10. At present, a full set of national comparative data is not yet available for 2002. The 2001 GCSE results were close to national averages and the best that the school had obtained. Even so, there was variation in the results for boys and girls, with girls performing better than boys compared to these differences nationally. Girls significantly outperformed boys in English, science, design and technology, French and Spanish, and religious education. In 2001 and 2002, there was little difference in mathematics and geography. Overall in 2001, boys and girls did better in drama, business education and design and technology and less well in French, Spanish and geography.
6. GCSE results across subjects in 2002 varied. In English, mathematics and science, results were below the national average. They were also below the national average in information and communication technology, music and religious education and well below in design and technology, geography, French and Spanish. Results were close to the national average in art and design and history. In physical education, they were above the results for all schools nationally. Results in drama have been consistently above the national average for all schools for the last

three years. Results have shown improvement over the last three years in mathematics, art and design, physical education and significantly so in French and Spanish.

7. In work seen during the inspection, standards varied from below average to average by the end of Year 9 and Year 11. This shows satisfactory progress through the school and pupils achieving as might be expected of them. It also demonstrates that the school is successful in motivating and supporting pupils who do not have the benefit of the proportion of higher-attaining pupils who normally drive standards upwards. In subjects such as business studies, drama, music, physical education, religious education and design and technology in Year 9, pupils achieve well and their work is at least of a similar standard to that nationally if not better. However, boys do not do as well as girls.
8. Pupils who have special educational needs achieve as well as others. This is shown in their improvement in reading, the achievement of objectives on statements of special educational needs, and in GCSE results where many achieve up to nine grades in the D to G range. Pupils make good progress when withdrawn in small groups for specialist teaching, and when supported by learning support assistants in lessons. In English, design and technology, music, physical education and religious education, they make progress particularly well because of the good match of work to their learning needs. In most other subjects pupils' progress is satisfactory but slower than it could be, because of either a lack of specialist support from learning support assistants or from work not being sufficiently well planned to meet their specific learning requirements.
9. The school is at an early stage of making provision for gifted and talented pupils but they, too, achieve in a satisfactory manner. The very small number of pupils who have English as an additional language are fully integrated into all lessons and their achievements are satisfactory.
10. Standards in literacy are in line with national expectations for speaking and listening and reading. They are below average for writing. Where opportunities are provided, pupils express themselves clearly and confidently in speech, using appropriate vocabulary with growing precision. They can read and understand both fiction and non-fiction, employing effective skills to find and select information. They are also developing their reading for nuance and underlying meaning. Although writing skills are improving in English lessons, these are not being applied consistently across subjects. Clumsy expression, poor presentation, and weaknesses in spelling, punctuation and grammar are lowering achievement, particularly that of boys.
11. Standards of numeracy are below average overall. Pupils are reasonably competent with written arithmetic. Most have adequate knowledge of tables and other number facts; higher-attaining pupils are competent and confident with mental calculation. Standards of statistical work are broadly average. Most pupils cope reasonably well with the basic numerical demands of other subjects. For example, pupils collect and display data effectively across a range of subjects; many also interpret and analyse graphs appropriately. Pupils make especially good use of their statistical skills to record and analyse research findings in their geography GCSE coursework.
12. Standards in information and communication technology are broadly average in taught information and communication technology lessons. There are, however, too few occasions when pupils develop their knowledge and skills in other lessons and standards are thus below average overall.
13. Since the last inspection, the trend of improvement in Year 9 National Curriculum tests has been in line with that nationally. The trend for GCSE results has been below that nationally, although until 2001 results were improving. The average points score had remained in line with that nationally and was above other secondary modern schools. Even with the severity of staff shortages, pupils have made satisfactory progress and achieved at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 as might be expected given their prior attainment. Overall, there has been satisfactory improvement.

## **Sixth form**

14. Results overall in the school's A-level examinations were somewhat better in 2002 than in 2001. They were broadly as might be expected, given students' GCSE scores on entry to the sixth form. As national comparative data for 2002 is not yet available, the school's 2001 results are used to compare its performance with that of all schools nationally.
15. Students take examinations leading to AS, A-level and AVCE accreditation. In 2001, the school's results, averaged across all such examinations, were well below average. However, there was a significant difference between AS and A-level results and AVCE results. Whilst the former were well below average, students' AVCE results were just above average in relation to all schools nationally. Overall, female students did rather better than male students; the gap in performance was similar to that found nationally.
16. Results in different subjects vary considerably from year to year. In 2001, results were well below average in art and design, drama and English literature; they were above average in the vocational business examination. Numbers taking examinations in other subjects were too small for reliable comparison with national results. Since 1998, results have been above or well above average in the vocational examinations in business and in health and social care. All students also take a key skills qualification. Results have been well below average. Achievement has been unsatisfactory since, in many instances, students did not complete the portfolio of work required for successful accreditation.
17. In general, retention rates are good. The proportion of students entering the sixth form from the main school is relatively small and around 30 per cent. Those who attain above-average GCSE results at the end of Year 11 tend to transfer to the grammar school and some students move to other further education colleges. The most popular courses are the one-year vocational courses. There are a few changes of courses at the beginning of Year 12 as some students find the work demanding but very few students leave the school. Those who do so during the year are usually offered employment opportunities that suit their aspirations better than completing their one-year courses.
18. In the standards of work seen during the inspection, standards are below average for AS and A-level courses but average or above for vocational courses. This is because students' attainment on entry is well below that usually found for AS and A-level work. Students work very hard and do their best to achieve well but many struggle with the higher level of intellectual challenge. On the vocational courses, many have experienced the style of working through the GNVQ course in health and social care in Years 10 and 11. This has prepared them well for completing projects and portfolios and the methods of learning suit many students well. Within lessons, progress is frequently good. However, achievement remains satisfactory at the end of courses because students find it difficult to recall and apply their learning. Most students gain the grades that could be expected of them, based on their prior attainment.

## **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

19. Overall, pupils' attitudes in the main part of the school are satisfactory. Most pupils behave well in lessons but a minority, large enough to be significant, requires firm management by members of staff to ensure that they do not disrupt lessons. Pupils' response to the school's provision for their personal development is satisfactory, but relationships within the school are good. Attendance is satisfactory and close to the average for schools nationally.
20. Pupils' attitudes to the school are satisfactory. Most pupils say they like the school and the work they do there. They are attentive during lessons and listen carefully. Many pupils are well motivated and want to do well. Their attitudes to their studies are best when the teaching both challenges them and involves them in the lesson, thus maintaining their interest and concentration. Pupils then answer questions readily and join in discussion. Higher-attaining pupils will contribute ideas. Pupils also respond well when they are given set time limits for completing tasks. For example, in a Year 7 design and technology lesson, clear directions were given by the teacher for what was expected. The pupils then organised themselves responsibly and worked hard to finish in time. However, there exists a minority of pupils, mainly lower-attaining boys, who take little pride in their work. They



have more interest in messing and fooling around than in learning. Most will respond to firm management, but this can take time and slow down the pace of learning for all. However, pupils enjoy the many activities outside lessons which the school organises. Many pupils take part in sport and study clubs, for example.

21. On balance, standards of behaviour are satisfactory. Most pupils behave well in lessons: they want to learn. They dislike the way the silly behaviour of a minority can interfere with lessons. They approve of the way their teachers handle such pupils to minimise disruption. Although all year groups have pupils who behave badly in lessons, during the inspection behaviour was managed better in Years 7 to 9. These pupils are a minority, but make their presence felt by taking up too much of the teacher's time. Standards of behaviour as pupils move around the school are also satisfactory. The majority of pupils behave well and are considerate towards others. Behaviour at break and lunch can be noisy, but is generally good-humoured. There is some rowdy behaviour, mainly from boys who scuffle around and can be cheeky to members of staff. At times, bullying happens, but pupils interviewed were all confident that cases would be reported and dealt with quickly. There was one permanent exclusion in the previous academic year, which is lower than average. The number of fixed-term exclusions is above average. Most exclusions followed incidents which had an adverse effect on other pupils' learning.
22. Pupils' response to the school's provision for their personal development is satisfactory overall. They respond well to the opportunities in the extended daily tutorial to develop the social skills needed in everyday life in school and outside. They learn from the discussion and debates on topical issues. There was a good example of a lively debate in a Year 9 tutorial when pupils considered whether celebrities had a right to privacy. The process of a full election for aspiring members of the school council mirror government elections, giving an insight into democratic processes. Residential trips are popular. Despite these opportunities, however, pupils are not always ready to take on responsibility when it is offered and some can be reluctant to research and work independently. Others respond in a lacklustre manner and complain of being bored. Pupils with behavioural problems caused by weak social skills respond well to the support given by the school's Kickstart programme. Relations in the school are good, especially between pupils and members of staff; this helped learning in many lessons seen during the course of the inspection. Relations among pupils are also usually good. Most can collaborate well when asked to work in pairs or groups, sharing their results and evaluations. Physical education lessons provided many examples of effective co-operation.
23. The rate of attendance for the academic year 2000/2001 was 90.3 per cent, which is below the average for schools nationally. In 2001/2002 attendance improved to an overall rate of 90.7 per cent, close to the national average. Authorised absence was 8.8 per cent while unauthorised absence was 0.7 per cent. These figures are satisfactory.
24. Good progress has been made by the school to control and modify pupils' anti-social behaviour. As a result, behaviour has improved in response to better management. Attendance figures have also improved since the last inspection, when they dropped to below average, and are now matching those nationally.

### **Sixth Form Attitudes**

25. Students in the sixth form have good attitudes towards their studies, appreciably better than in the main part of the school. They like what they study and are prepared to work hard. In an English lesson, when Y13 students were looking at the poetry of Siegfried Sassoon, all were engrossed and interested, making notes as they listened to the teacher and each other. Students value the good relations they have with their teachers and the advice and support they get from them. They consider this helps them to make progress with their studies. Relations are equally good among students: they work well together and enjoy the benefits of smaller classes. They can co-operate very effectively, as was demonstrated by the series of presentations made during tutorial groups on suitable locations for a residential visit. The preparation for these involved considerable research. Students take an active part in the life of the main school. For example, they organise basketball for Year 7 pupils. One of the organisational projects on the business studies course will be a fashion show, with pupils from the main school as models. Students are glad they chose to

continue into the sixth form and feel they are doing well there. Their attendance levels are generally good.

## HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

26. Teaching is satisfactory overall, with a significant proportion that is good, in Years 7 to 11. Of the lessons observed, about six out of every ten are good but relatively few lessons are very good or excellent. The proportion of unsatisfactory teaching has diminished significantly since the last inspection, when over a quarter was unsatisfactory. Less than one in twelve of the lessons seen were unsatisfactory during the inspection week.
27. The school has had a strong focus on improving teaching. It has been the first key target on the school's strategic plan. Senior and middle managers have made regular classroom observations of lessons in order to develop a common approach to lesson structure and the way pupils are taught. This process has been very successful as the feedback to teachers has been instrumental in promoting a shared understanding of the fundamentals of a good lesson.
28. Teaching has improved because planning is good and many lessons now start with a clear introduction that sets out what pupils are going to learn and what they will be doing. As a consequence, pupils begin these lessons purposefully and in the right frame of mind to learn. Some very good examples were seen in English, mathematics, science, design and technology and music. However, there were fewer occasions when teachers summarized the lesson and made the link back to the planned learning outcomes. An exception to this was English, where teachers regularly reinforced what the purpose of the lesson had been and what had been learned. The school has already recognized that this is an area that teachers need to develop further.
29. There has been a high turnover of teaching staff and severe staffing shortages in some subjects. The school has made every effort to recruit specialist staff and has achieved this successfully in most subjects. However, these changes have delayed the impact of training on the quality of teaching and on pupils' learning and their achievements. There are examples of good teaching in all subjects and it is consistently so in English, business education, drama, design and technology, geography, music, physical education and religious education. Some excellent teaching was seen in English, mathematics, geography and business education. In these lessons, teachers capture pupils' interest, hold their attention, set work that demands concentration and have very high expectations of the work that will be produced. For example, in a Year 8 geography lesson, the teacher set a high challenge for pupils of a wide range of attainment to plan and organize their work; the teacher used energetic and well-targeted monitoring to ensure that pupils were helped and guided to make very good progress in their learning.
30. The overall quality of teaching is unsatisfactory in both French and Spanish. These subject areas have experienced staffing changes that have brought about the current weak performance. Some unsatisfactory teaching was also seen in mathematics, information and communication technology and tutorial time. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, it is usually because teachers have not mastered how to manage the behaviour of their classes; in some lessons work is not pitched at the right level. The school has a small number of pupils who have very challenging behaviour and need a lot of support. Unfortunately, these pupils, and others who persist in low-level silly behaviour, take up too much of teachers' time and at times prevent other pupils from learning. In science in Year 9 and mathematics in Year 7, the wide range of attainment in classes made it very difficult for teachers to ensure that the learning needs of all pupils were met suitably well and that learning took place at a sufficiently fast pace.
31. A strength of teaching is planning. Teachers have a good understanding of the pupils in their classes and know those who have special educational needs. Generally, planning takes account of individual needs and all classes have seating plans. Teachers are therefore well prepared for their lessons and convey this well to pupils; teachers' intentions for lessons to be inclusive are fully met. For example, in music all attainment levels are well catered for, including talented pupils, those with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language. In art and design, planning ensures that learning concepts are taught in sequence and that interesting resources, including references to well-known artists and art movements, are carefully prepared and extension work is available for higher-attaining pupils.

32. Teachers' subject knowledge is good. For example, in physical education, pupils' learning and understanding are developed well because teachers use their good knowledge to modify equipment, simplify tasks and to use demonstrations. When good subject knowledge is coupled with penetrating questioning, pupils usually respond well to the greater challenge to their thinking. During a very good Year 8 mathematics lesson, the teacher's questions helped to recap previous learning and to emphasize key points. Pupils were very keen to learn and asked sensible questions back as they wanted to understand more deeply. The teacher's strength of subject knowledge was drawn upon to allow pupils to try to find different ways to tackle fractions.
33. At present, about a third of the teaching is still too routine and, although satisfactory, it lacks the additional challenge, expectations and pace that have been described. It is frequently on these occasions that pupils misbehave and waste time and learning is not as productive as it could be. In general, homework is not used consistently well to support learning across subjects: this was a view also expressed by parents. There is also inconsistency in the frequency and the way that teachers mark work. For example, in geography marking does not always provide detailed, specific guidance for improvement and in history, teachers' comments do not always give an indication of how learning can be developed.
34. Learning is usually satisfactory and often good. It is much better when teachers set clear times for tasks and keep pupils involved in all aspects of the lessons. In drama for example, pupils are well equipped to self-evaluate because they understand the criteria for success. In English, teachers use a range of strategies so that pupils participate, such as in a Year 9 lesson where pupils felt secure and their contributions were valued.
35. Overall, the teaching of literacy is satisfactory. The teaching of literacy in English lessons is good. Practice in other subjects is more varied. Most subjects display key vocabulary but the consolidation of the use of vocabulary and spelling is inconsistent. In some subjects such as history, key words are referred to but are not systematically reinforced by effective board work or the use of glossaries. Reading is well supported in a number of subjects and in class tutorial periods where individual, silent reading is encouraged and discussed. Opportunities for developing pupils' writing are not taken consistently, and both the content and presentation of writing still require improvement. Year 7 pupils are identified and withdrawn for one-hour sessions to follow the Literacy Progress Units. Although their literacy is improving, this time could be used more efficiently for units that are intended as short, fast-paced 'catch-up' sessions.
36. The teaching of numeracy is broadly satisfactory. Numerical skills are taught well in mathematics lessons; teachers give due attention to the development of both written arithmetic and mental calculation. Pupils are taught to use calculators efficiently and appropriately. They are encouraged also to use and apply their numerical skills and knowledge to solve mathematical problems. However, overall, there are limited opportunities for pupils to use and develop their skills across subjects. Pupils practise basic algebraic skills in science, by manipulating simple formulae. There is some use of measurement in design and technology. Opportunities to develop statistical techniques occur in a range of subjects, including design and technology, history and geography. However, as yet, there is no whole school approach to the teaching of numeracy. The school has yet to decide how the work of the mathematics department will be supported by the systematic development of pupils' numerical skills across subjects.
37. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory overall. When pupils are withdrawn for individual or small group tuition they receive good attention and support for learning by the learning support team. In many of their other lessons, class sizes are large and whilst teachers are aware of their needs and plan for these, there are too few learning support assistants to help when these pupils encounter difficulties in learning. Teaching is frequently good in English, drama, design and technology, music, physical education and religious education. In the best lessons, skilful, supportive yet appropriately challenging teaching enables pupils to work with confidence to full capacity. This was especially evident in two Year 11 English lessons where excellent stimulus and lesson structure enabled pupils to participate with confidence in high quality discussion, and in a lesson on information-handling on the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) course where pupils made good progress because of good planning, strong encouragement for independent work and a very positive working atmosphere. At

present, the liaison between the special needs specialists and English teachers is not close enough to consolidate pupils' learning from the use of progress units. None of the pupils with English as an additional language are at the initial stages of learning English. They are well integrated into lessons and learn as well as their class-mates.

38. Good progress has been made since the last inspection in improving the overall quality of teaching and learning. At the time of the last inspection, teaching was satisfactory or better in Years 7 to 9 in about six out of every ten lessons, and in Years 10 and 11 in about seven out of every ten lessons; these proportions have now risen to over nine out of ten lessons being satisfactory or better. Lessons are now well structured and teachers have a consistent approach to how they start lessons. Teachers know and use the procedures for behaviour management and consequently there is far less unsatisfactory teaching or learning. As yet, these improvements have not permeated through to improvements in test and examination results but learning and progress in lessons are frequently good.

### **Sixth form**

39. Teaching is good in the sixth form; frequently it is very good. In a third of lessons, teaching was very good; one lesson was excellent and one was unsatisfactory. Teaching is very good in drama, leisure and recreation, health and social care and good in mathematics, design and technology, business education, physical education and English. It is satisfactory in art and design and information and communication technology.
40. Teachers prepare their lessons very well to suit the learning needs of students in their groups. They plan thoroughly and select activities that will help students to understand. However, there are times when there is conflict about trying to develop students' understanding and meeting examination requirements; for example, in mathematics. Teachers endeavour to fill the gaps in students' understanding on the A-level courses so they can obtain pass grades.
41. Explanations and instructions are given clearly to students. Students know exactly what is expected of them because lesson objectives are shared with them. Most teachers have high expectations of students and get the best work out of them. For example, in business education these expectations contribute very strongly to the very good progress that students make.
42. Within lessons, teachers frequently give students good quality feedback on how they are learning. For example, in information and communication technology, students learn more easily because the teacher pinpoints difficulties and highlights areas that need improving. Teachers generally understand how students learn and what their needs are. In physical education, this is reflected in the way that resources are used to support learning. As a consequence of small group sizes, students receive a lot of individual help; this is very much appreciated and ensures that higher and lower-attaining pupils are supported well in their learning.
43. Students learn well overall but they do not work independently enough in all subjects. Teachers do not provide opportunities, or the support, for students to think for themselves and to become self-sufficient in all subjects. Vocational courses provide these opportunities very well and expect students to become responsible for their work. In design and technology, art and design and English students do not readily follow their own lines of enquiry or research in depth. An example in English was where on two separate occasions, teachers read extracts to students that they could have read for themselves outside the lessons.

### **HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?**

44. The curriculum provides a broad range of learning experiences and is fully inclusive both socially and educationally. It has improved since the last inspection. Planning is underpinned by the school aims to ensure that all pupils, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language, have access to a broad range of subjects and learning experiences. The legal requirements of the National Curriculum are met apart from those for information and communication technology in Years 7 to 11, and religious education in the sixth form; this leads to a lack of breadth of provision and holds back standards in these curricular areas. The strong

emphasis placed on the importance of the performing arts throughout the school is enriched by the liaison with a neighbouring school in a performing arts project.

45. The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 is good. In addition to all of the subjects of the National Curriculum, pupils follow courses in personal, social and health education, drama and dance. They learn both French and Spanish in Year 7, and choose one language to study in greater depth in Years 8 and 9.
46. In Years 10 and 11 the curriculum is satisfactory. All pupils follow a broad range of subjects that includes a core of English, mathematics, science, information and communication technology and religious education. Half GCSE courses are available in information and communication technology and religious education. There is an appropriate range of GCSE options, including business studies, design and technology, history, geography, French, Spanish, art, music and physical education. A GNVQ course is offered in health and social care and the ASDAN course is also available.
47. The curriculum does not fully meet statutory requirements because key elements of the information and communication technology programmes of study are not covered in Years 10 and 11. In many subjects such as mathematics, science, art and design, design and technology, history, modern foreign languages, music and religious education, information and communication technology either does not meet National Curriculum requirements or does not support learning well. There are minor weaknesses in history resulting from the local history module in the 1750-1900 period not being taught.
48. The consideration of an alternative curriculum to meet the interests and learning needs of all pupils in Years 10 to 11, and especially for those who are often absent or have learning or behavioural difficulties, is at an early stage. Its further development is properly regarded as a priority by the school. An ASDAN course has been recently introduced in Year 10, and links with local colleges are being developed. Pupils are selected for this course and appropriately disapplied from modern languages, and study single rather than double science as a consequence.
49. Provision for literacy and numeracy is satisfactory. The Key Stage 3 literacy framework has been incorporated successfully into English schemes of work. Year 7 pupils are identified and withdrawn for one-hour sessions to follow the literacy progress units. Although their literacy is improving this time could be used more efficiently for units that are intended as short, fast-paced 'catch-up' sessions. Practice and development of literacy skills across subjects is varied. As yet, there is no whole-school approach to the teaching of numeracy. The school has yet to decide how the work of the mathematics department will be supported by the systematic development of pupils' numerical skills across subjects.
50. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. Provision is guided by strongly-held views of the importance of ensuring full educational and social inclusion. All pupils have full access to the whole range of the curriculum, and also to developing provision to match their specific learning requirements. Pupils receive support in developing specific literacy skills through a well-organised programme of withdrawal from lessons. This includes work in literacy progress units and the Kickstart programme, led by the inclusion manager, which focuses especially on behavioural and social competence. Planning for the use of information and communication technology to support and enhance learning is well advanced. Pupils with English as an additional language follow the full curriculum.
51. Planning to ensure that appropriate provision is made for gifted and talented pupils is at a very early stage of development. The school is committed to meeting the needs of very able pupils, but the current gifted and talented policy needs updating to ensure that pupils are identified throughout the school, schemes are developed to ensure that teaching provides appropriate challenge and support for their learning, and their progress is closely tracked.
52. There is good support for equal opportunities and inclusion. The school is strongly committed to ensuring that all pupils have full access to the curriculum and that all achieve their full potential. The school aims recognise the needs of individuals regardless of race, culture, religion, gender, ability or age. This aim is well supported by the school's policies both for equality of opportunity

and for admission to the main school and the sixth form. Boys' low standards and weaknesses in writing are beginning to be addressed through the inclusion unit and the consideration of greater work-related learning opportunities. There is no significant difference in the achievement of other groups of pupils; for instance, between pupils from different ethnic groups.

53. The personal and education programme course is very good. The programme is very well planned, clearly focused, relevant and kept under review. It encompasses health education, including sex and drugs education, careers guidance and citizenship. It is taught through fortnightly timetabled lessons and tutorial periods. The co-ordinator has prepared detailed materials and works closely with key stage managers to ensure it is taught effectively. Much of the teaching is good but some weaknesses indicate the need for further training and additional monitoring of teaching.
54. Citizenship is well planned as a key element of the personal education programme. Provision has been recently enhanced as a result of an audit of provision against the national guidelines. This has resulted in additional detailed programmes of work and the comprehensive cover of a wide range of appropriate and relevant topics. The subject is not identified clearly enough, both within the personal and social education programme and other subjects, to ensure consistency in its delivery.
55. Provision for careers guidance is very good. Careers education is very well planned and managed to meet the needs of pupils as they progress through the school. It is well supported by detailed schemes of work and productive liaison with external agencies, including effective liaison with the local careers adviser. Very good features of guidance include the well-organised, high-quality work experience that is provided for Year 10 pupils in the summer term and careers talks, conventions and individual careers interviews that are provided by the school and the local careers service. These are arranged towards the end of Years 11 and 13. Through these events, a valuable contribution is made to pupils' personal development. The school ensures that students are aware of all the opportunities open to them and are guided on to the most appropriate courses for their needs. Pupils with special educational needs are given priority when interviews and work placements are arranged.
56. Work experience is well organised in co-operation with local businesses to meet the entitlement of each pupil. During their work experience all pupils write a log and compete for the 'Best work experience' competition, run by the county, which is open to all secondary schools. Pupils from Buckingham School won the top award two years running. Pupils have also won the 'Environmental prize' sponsored by a major utilities company for the best logbook. Work experience log books are extremely comprehensive and cover major issues such as health and safety at work. These are often used towards GCSE course work in other subjects.
57. Pupils have very good opportunities to enrich their learning experiences through out-of-lesson activities and clubs. Provision is very good, particularly in physical education and the performing arts. Music, drama and dance activities provide regular opportunities for pupils to practise and improve their skills in informal settings, as well as through school concerts and drama productions. A high proportion of pupils participate in the wide range of sporting activities that are available in clubs, inter-school matches and inter-form competitions. Most subjects have clubs at lunchtime and after school to support pupils' learning, especially for GCSE studies. These are well attended and valued by pupils. There is an annual residential visit to Green Park for Year 7 pupils and there are visits abroad, including those for modern foreign languages and humanities. There are also visits to art galleries, museums, field study centres and other institutions that support pupils' learning.
58. The school values the contribution made by the local community to pupils' learning. The personal and social education programme, work experience and careers education are extremely well supported by numerous local companies and agencies including the army, prison service and the Citizens Advice Bureau. The school would like to see similar support in other subjects, for instance in science and in design and technology. Extensive use of the Internet, to enable pupils' learning to benefit from the world-wide community, is developing well. Links are developing with colleges of further education in other towns and there are satisfactory links with local partner primary schools.

59. Improvement has been broadly satisfactory. The time balance for English and modern foreign languages has been improved; the good quality personal and social education has been maintained and the participation rates in out-of-lesson activities have increased.

### **Sixth form**

60. The curriculum is well matched to students' learning requirements and responds well to local circumstances. It focuses strongly on the provision of vocational courses as these reflect students' interests, and there is no other major provider of vocational courses in the town. The school is strongly committed to ensuring that students have access to a good balance and range of subject combinations which are well suited to their needs. This results in a core of vocational courses supported by a few A-level and AS-level courses. All students also follow a key skills course.
61. AVCE courses are offered in business education, health and social care, information and communication technology and leisure and recreation at both advanced and intermediate levels. AS-level and A-level courses in English literature, art and design, design and technology, theatre studies, geography, history, mathematics, modern languages and physical education are provided to enable students to make appropriate combinations of subjects. Some teaching groups are very small for AS-level and A-level courses; this is not efficient and does not provide students with a stimulating learning environment. A vocational course in physical education has recently been introduced.
62. All students study key skills to Levels 1, 2 or 3. The full range of key skills is covered. The core skills of communication, information communication and technology and application of number are taught in discrete lessons and identified areas in other subjects. However, students' skills are not developed systematically enough across subjects. The wider skills of working with others, improving learning and problem-solving are covered in tutorial periods and in a range of activities, including fund-raising for charity and expeditions.
63. Students' learning benefits from the very strong core provision for physical education, which incorporates a sports leadership award and results in many of the most talented students achieving well at county and international levels in their chosen sports. Learning also benefits from the well-planned personal and social education and tutorial programmes. These are enhanced further by the strong community support, especially for the community service and work placements that form an important part of students' learning experiences. However, religious education is not provided; this is a breach of statutory requirements and there are very limited opportunities for pupils' horizons to be broadened through general studies or a planned enrichment programme.
64. The high quality of careers guidance and advice received in the lower school continues into post-16 education. The good range of vocational courses offered relate well to employment and local higher education opportunities in the area. Students are helped to match their aspirations to their attainment potential during tutorial and key skills lessons. These lessons are monitored for their relevance and quality by the head of the sixth form, who has excellent knowledge of individual students' needs. Students speak confidently about their career paths and verify that they have received good advice about their choice of courses. This is confirmed by the very good retention rates in the sixth form. Year 12 students have careers interviews if they request them and all Year 13 students have interviews to which parents are invited. Students benefit from work experience placements that are directly related to their courses and chosen careers. These make a significant contribution to students' personal education and study skills. The annual careers convention is extremely well organised and attended by a very comprehensive range of local employers and representatives of professional associations. This provides an excellent opportunity for students to explore careers and training routes.
65. The provision for extra-curricular enrichment in the sixth form is good. Provision is strong in sport, particularly in basketball, football and badminton. Sixth-form students coach the Year 7 and Year 8 basketball teams; they run the lunchtime inter-form sport activities competitions. There is an annual Year 12 key skills course residential and all subject areas support students through the provision of regular revision classes. Visits to art galleries, museums, field study centres and other institutions also support students' learning.

66. The school is keen to develop links with other post-16 providers to broaden students' opportunities. Students are given impartial advice about provision in other schools and colleges so that their best interests are met. This is much appreciated but many students feel that the arrangements for their induction to courses at the school could be strengthened.

### **Spiritual, social, moral and cultural development**

67. Overall, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Provision for pupils' moral and social education is good and pupils respond accordingly. However, the school's contribution to their spiritual and cultural development is only satisfactory with some weaknesses related to multi-cultural education. The school does not have a policy for spiritual, moral, social and cultural education and has not planned to develop this area of the curriculum; very few subjects plan or actively promote pupils' development and good practice is not recognised or disseminated.
68. The contribution that the school makes to pupils' spirituality is satisfactory overall, although collective worship does not provide many opportunities for this aspect of personal development. All year groups have one assembly a week but spirituality is not promoted well; there are few opportunities for reflection. On other days of the week, extended tutor periods cover the personal and social education programme but they do not incorporate an act of worship. There are some opportunities to promote spiritual development. For example, there is a strong focus on drugs awareness programmes, which seeks to heighten self-respect. Circle time gives pupils the opportunity to understand human feelings and emotions and the way they influence people. Religious education, which is studied by all pupils, successfully encourages thoughts about the search for meaning, purpose and identity. Science investigations, using microbes, encourage the development of an appreciation for the intangible. English makes a strong contribution to spiritual development, as does geography. These subjects create an environment in which pupils are respected and grow in self-confidence. Dance and drama develop pupils' creativity well.
69. Provision for moral education is good and the majority of pupils react positively to the school's promotion of correct attitudes and responses. The school's behaviour code highlights right and wrong. This is generally well implemented in classrooms, facilitated by the good relationships that exist between teachers and pupils. However, a small minority of pupils do not act as though they understand the implications of unacceptable behaviour. The majority of teachers reinforce moral values by their insistence on correct conduct and by being good role models. For instance, physical education staff have high expectations about appropriate sporting behaviour. A good example of moral education was seen in history where pupils were encouraged to reflect on the effects of Nazi policy on society. Good discussions took place in geography that allowed pupils to express their views on moral issues such as world food supplies and racial equality. A wide range of ethical questions such as the existence of evil and the implications of the Ten Commandments are studied in religious education lessons, and are the subject of good discussions. English, and some of the well-organised personal and social education programmes, also make a positive contribution to moral education.
70. The provision for social education is good. A number of subjects, such as drama, business education, history, geography and physical education offer opportunities for collaborative work and pupils work successfully as a team. The very good range of extra-curricular activities enables pupils to relate well to people in other social settings and develop a range of personal qualities. Mentoring systems allow additional relationships to be formed and give pupils the opportunity to reflect on the contributions of themselves to the social group. Pupils exercise responsibility through membership of the school council although there are too few opportunities to develop this trait and take the initiative. The emerging citizenship programme gives pupils the opportunity to appreciate the rights and responsibilities of individuals.
71. Overall, the development of cultural awareness is satisfactory, although multi-cultural education is a weaker area of provision. The majority of subjects, especially English, give pupils the opportunity to study aspects of British and other cultures. For example, Year 7 and 8 learn about Chinese music and Year 9 listen to Indian music. Geography offers many opportunities for students to appreciate the diversity and interdependence of cultures throughout the world. There are a few



visits to art galleries and museums. Although these promote an awareness of local culture, this aspect of cultural education is not a strength of the school. Visits by religious leaders are not frequent, especially by non-Christians, and nor are visits to places of worship. Religious education offers a curriculum that teaches the basic religious tenets of the main faith communities in Britain. Pupils are taught to respect other people's beliefs. However, there is inconsistent provision of opportunities to prepare pupils for life in a multicultural society and for them to understand the contribution of different ethnic groups to the social, cultural and economic life of Britain.

72. There has been satisfactory improvement in spiritual, moral, social and cultural development since the previous inspection. Moral education, in particular, has improved, but the school still does not offer a daily act of collective worship and statutory requirements are not met.

### **Sixth form**

73. Overall, the sixth-form provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is unsatisfactory, reflecting the lack of opportunities for students to develop their spirituality and cultural horizons. These aspects of personal development are unsatisfactory. The lack of a well-planned enrichment course precludes cultural development. There is no daily act of collective worship and tutor periods are not organised to engender reflection and a sense of awe and wonder. The school does not offer a wide general studies programme that would allow all students to enhance a sense of empathy with others. Religious education is not taught and students cannot increase their understanding of their own and others' beliefs. The school is not meeting statutory requirements for religious education. It does not provide a programme of religious education that meets the criteria laid down in the locally agreed syllabus. Although some courses, such as health and social care, contribute well towards spiritual development, these opportunities are not open to all.
74. The provision and student responses for social and moral education are good. The school's personal and social education curriculum continues in the sixth form, albeit with less time. It offers some opportunities for the development of moral and social education in its units on issues related to sexuality and drugs. All students are required to take the key skills programme. The unit on planning a residential visit allows students to enhance their social skills well, as do the business education courses. Students taking the leisure and tourism and health and social care courses extend their moral development, as do those studying physical education.

### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

75. The school's procedures for the care and welfare of pupils are good. Pupils stay in the same groups throughout their time in the main school. Members of staff know them well. Tutors and the key stage managers use their knowledge of pupils effectively to guide them. The daily tutorial period – which takes place after afternoon registration - is longer than in most schools. This time is used well. It covers not just the administrative aspects of a tutor group, for example checking planners and reviews, but is also linked to the personal, social and health education programme and incorporates such elements of citizenship as debates on topical issues. During the inspection, for example, one group discussed bills put forward in the Queen's speech at the opening of Parliament. The monitoring of pupils' personal development is good. Tutors and key stage managers are responsible for this. They have a wide available range of information available to help them in this and make good use of it.
76. The procedures for child protection are good and follow the practice recommended by the local education authority with appropriate training and guidance for members of staff. The school has introduced a filter system for the Internet with guidelines for responsible use. There are good procedures for pupils' general safety. Very good procedures to monitor and improve attendance have raised the overall rate of attendance during the past year. Attendance now has a high profile. Rates for tutor groups are displayed, with tangible rewards for the most successful groups and individuals.
77. The procedures to monitor and promote good behaviour, and by implication to reduce oppressive behaviour, are good. This was a key issue in the previous inspection report. Much work has been done since then. The range of sanctions has been revised and a new system of rewards instituted. Teachers have been trained in behaviour management, including how to handle bullying. An

inclusion manager has been appointed to help those pupils whose behaviour puts them at risk of exclusion to improve their self-control in lessons. Members of the senior management team give additional support in problem classes, especially in Years 7 to 9. The result of these changes is that the challenging behaviour of some pupils is now better controlled, though not yet eliminated. Lessons proceed more smoothly with less disruption.

78. The programme of tutor and subject reviews brings together the monitoring of pupils' academic and personal progress. Both draw on the extensive data which the school collects to track pupils' progress and use this information to help pupils to do well. An example of this is the way members of staff mentor selected pupils in Year 11, which those pupils find particularly motivating. The overall quality of educational and personal support and guidance is good.
79. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is closely monitored through regular testing and other clearly-focused assessment procedures. These include the regular review of targets on individual education plans which provide a secure basis for the monitoring and assessment of pupils' progress. The annual reviews of Statements of Special Educational Needs meet statutory requirements fully and reviews are well attended by pupils, parents and representatives of external agencies. The objectives set in statements are well met in practice.
80. The school has effective procedures in place to monitor and support pupils' academic progress. At the start of Year 7, pupils are given targets for their performance in their end of Year 9 national tests. Similarly, Year 10 pupils are given target grades for their subsequent GCSE performance. These targets result initially from tests administered by a nationally-recognised external agency. Pupils' progress is monitored regularly against these targets. Each subject makes a twice-yearly assessment of pupils' attainment against National Curriculum or GCSE criteria. Pupils are given useful feedback from these interim assessments; most know what they are aiming for and their current 'working at' level or grade. If appropriate, initial targets are adjusted upwards after agreement between pupils and their subject teachers. Tutors receive all assessment data; they monitor pupils' performance across a range of subjects. Parents are informed and consulted if pupils are underachieving to any significant extent.
81. Assessment procedures are implemented well in Years 10 and 11. Subject teachers assess pupils' attainment accurately against GCSE criteria. They use the results of such assessments to inform their teaching and to give support to individuals. In some subjects, but not all, pupils are aware of their own strengths and weaknesses; they know what they must do in order to improve their work and record sensible and useful personal targets in their planners. Pastoral staff are also involved appropriately. The key stage manager has oversight of all data. Pupils who should attain five or more grades A\* to C, but who are underachieving, are identified for mentoring in Year 11. Around 40 pupils were identified in 2002. Results show that this process was successful in helping many of these pupils to reach their target grades. Tracking of pupils' progress as described above has been in operation for only two years; mentoring has been in place for just one year. Even so, these procedures have helped pupils to achieve satisfactory results given their attainment at the start of Year 10.
82. Procedures are implemented less effectively at present in Years 7 to 9. Pupils' attainment is assessed regularly and accurately in English, mathematics and science against National Curriculum criteria. The results of such assessments are used well inform teaching, to track progress and to support individuals. However, in many other subjects, assessment against National Curriculum criteria is inaccurate. Teachers' assessments are unreliable - and often too high - in art and design, design and technology, history and information and communication technology. This means that staff and pupils do not have a realistic understanding of current performance against national expectations. Consequently, the use of data to ensure that standards are as high as they should be by the end of Year 9 is less effective than it might be. Hence, across the whole school, the assessment and monitoring of pupils' academic performance is satisfactory.

## **Sixth form**

### **Assessment**

83. Overall, the school's use of assessment data to monitor and improve students' academic performance is satisfactory. The school has clear procedures, similar to those in the main school, whereby students are set targets for the end of their course, based on their performance at GCSE. Students' progress towards meeting their targets is monitored regularly by subject teachers and by tutors. However, these procedures have been in operation for only one year; the school is aware that targets are not always sufficiently challenging and that the whole process needs further development. The rigorous use of data to track students' progress and to support their learning is not yet embedded sufficiently well to raise standards.
84. At departmental level, practice varies considerably. In all subjects, work is assessed regularly, often against examination criteria. Generally, teachers' assessments are accurate and reliable; they help students and their parents to have a realistic understanding of likely performance in future examinations. However, whilst teachers often discuss grades or marks given for various pieces of work with students, feedback does not always help students to understand their strengths and weaknesses sufficiently well, nor what they must do in order to improve the standard of their work.
85. There is excellent use of assessment in the vocational courses to support students' learning and to raise standards. The level of feedback given to students to help them improve their written work is exceptionally good in business education, in leisure and tourism and in health and social care. In these subjects, students are given clear short-term targets, relevant to their individual learning needs. Students know precisely what they need to do in order to be successful in their examinations. Hence, they achieve well, often from relatively low starting points.

#### ***Advice, support and guidance***

86. Students are supported very well during their time in the sixth form; they are given very good personal and educational support to help them achieve and gain success in their examination results. They receive good information about the courses provided for them. The school tries very hard to ensure that it offers what students want. They get good guidance while they are in Year 11 to help them choose. Induction procedures as students enter the sixth form are generally good but students would like to see these extended. Not enough training in the study skills needed for successful sixth-form work is given in all subjects at the start of courses. Students value the amount of help given by teachers during their courses. Vocational subjects in particular provide very good advice and support. The information and guidance that students receive about future courses or careers is very good. This applies equally to those seeking employment and those continuing to higher education. Students consider that regular discussions with their subject teachers give them a clear idea of their progress. Reports are made available to parents at appropriate times during students' courses. Students' rate of attendance is good, and monitored effectively.

#### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

87. Parents' views of the school are broadly satisfactory. Although the proportion of parents who returned the questionnaire and/or attended the pre-inspection parents' meeting was not high, the majority of these parents believe that their children like the school. They consider that they work hard and make progress. Parents also find the school approachable if they have questions or problems. The inspection team agrees with these parents' favourable views of the school.
88. However, significant numbers of those parents who returned the questionnaire expressed concerns about standards of behaviour in the school, about homework, and about the information they receive about progress. These parents also do not think that the school works closely with them or that it is well led and managed. Inspectors share parents' concerns about the behaviour of a minority of pupils. They consider that while most pupils do behave well and that, while standards of behaviour are on balance satisfactory, there are pupils who disrupt lessons if not managed effectively. Inspectors found that the amount and type of homework set is inconsistent; it varies between subjects. The inspection team considers that the information which parents receive about their children's progress is good overall. They think that the school does try to work closely with parents. Inspectors consider that many aspects of management are good.

89. Sixth-form students have favourable views of the school. They are pleased with the range of courses offered for them to study and readily involve themselves in sixth-form life.
90. The school has satisfactory links with parents. Tutors and key stage managers contact parents promptly when they are concerned about pupils and are available should parents wish to see them about their children. There is a suitable programme of subject and tutor consultations for parents in all year groups. Planners should provide an easy means of communication, but the use made of them by parents varies. The general information which the school provides about itself such as the prospectus, the governors' annual report, and the introductory and option booklets is satisfactory. Weekly newsletters are good, full of current events. The information that parents get about progress has good features such as the interim reports, known as data collections, which give a quick view of work and progress. The full annual reports give National Curriculum levels and GCSE predicted grades. Some subject comments give parents a clearer picture of what their children can do and need to do to improve than others. Overall, information provided for parents is good.
91. Parents' involvement and the contribution that they make to their children's learning is not extensive and is unsatisfactory; home-school contracts are not securely in place. The parent-teachers' association no longer exists because it received so little support. Subject clinics run for parents are not well attended. While attendance at consultation evenings can be good, it varies considerably. The number of pre-inspection questionnaires returned was lower than might be expected. There are exceptions: parents do help with transport for extra-curricular sporting activities when their children are taking part in them and they attended the sports award evening. Overall, parents do not appear convinced of the need for them to contribute actively to their partnership with the school.
92. Parental support and involvement is not as strong as reported in the previous inspection. There is no longer a parent-teachers' association and parents do not appear to take an active part in the life of the school.

#### **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

93. The overall leadership and management of the school are satisfactory with some aspects that are good. The school has been operating in a climate of financial difficulties and uncertainties over a long period of time; this was compounded by severe staffing shortages during 2000-1. During this time, a great deal of energy and time was used to ensure that pupils were kept in school and disruption to learning was kept to the minimum. The headteacher, governors and other senior managers have provided sound leadership and have managed the school well. A successful building programme has been completed, procedures to monitor and improve the quality of teaching have been implemented and training to improve middle managers' skills is securely in place.
94. The school's aims are reflected very well in the ethos of the school; this is a school that cares for all its pupils and endeavours to provide every opportunity for them to develop their own self-belief and confidence. Pupils are pleased to talk with visitors and most of them are friendly and very keen to take part in activities, particularly those that are extra-curricular. Overall, relationships are good and many pupils behave well. However, the school has a small number of pupils in each year group who have challenging behaviour and take up a disproportionate amount of senior staff time. The school wants to include and do the best for all pupils and there has been very good success in establishing a structured approach to lesson planning and behaviour management that promotes good learning. The inclusion manager manages behaviour well and is providing a good service to the school and to pupils.
95. The school has a clear sense of purpose about improving teaching and learning and managing behaviour, but the longer-term direction of the school is less clear. The school development plan has served the school well and has been shared and monitored with governors. The school is about to write a plan for the next three years but the direction and focus has not yet been debated and agreed. A major obstacle to overcome is the financial hardship that the school is now facing. The existing development plan was not costed and the school, with the approval of the governing body, has overspent its budget allocation for the past few years.

96. Monitoring procedures are good throughout the school but they are not always implemented rigorously enough to ensure that effective action is then taken to bring about improvements. For example, the line management system of senior management links with middle managers operates regularly and supportively. Written reports are presented to the senior management team and governing body so that a good overview of the work of the school is provided. However, meetings and reports do not focus enough on pupils' achievements and the progress they are making, or whether the school will achieve the targets it sets itself. The system for monitoring teaching, collating results and acting on these is very effective although this has not yet had the desired impact on raising standards.
97. Middle managers are generally providing good leadership and management of the areas for which they are responsible; this reflects the effects of the training that has taken place. Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and procedures are in place for managers to monitor the work of their teams. Apart from information and communication technology, which is without a curriculum manager, the leadership and management of all other departments is satisfactory or better; it is very good in design and technology.
98. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is well led and managed by the co-operative working arrangements of three people: an assistant headteacher, a specialist special needs teacher and the administrative assistant. This arrangement works very well because of the high quality of the team and the clear delegation of roles and responsibilities. The school's policy statement for special educational needs has been recently reviewed to ensure full compliance with the new Code of Practice. Good liaison with the inclusion manager, key stage and curriculum managers ensures good team work in supporting pupils' learning.
99. The governing body is well informed and very supportive of the school. It is very well organized with well-established procedures and clear guidelines for the way it operates. It receives full written reports on most aspects of the school's work and regularly monitors the progress of the school development plan and improvements that result from planned actions. However, it has not fulfilled its statutory duties to ensure that the requirements of the National Curriculum for information and communication technology are taught in Years 10 and 11, that religious education is taught in the sixth form, that a daily act of collective worship is provided and that the school has a policy on race equality. Governors have been provided with full information about the school's budget and they have monitored expenditure carefully. They fully understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school and because of their determination to maintain class sizes to less than 30 pupils, and to uphold teacher-pupil ratios and staffing levels, they have allowed the school to accrue an ever-increasing budget deficit. Their strategic contributions have not been strong enough to set a clear direction for the future of the school and the sixth form; this is partly because much of their time has been taken grappling with building projects, staffing shortages and working within a budget which the local education authority has described as being less favourable than that of many other schools. The local education authority accepts that Buckingham School "receives relatively low funding per pupil and to live within the budget allocation presents real problems and difficulties for the school". This is partly because the groups of pupils who dominate the profile of the school are not those who attract the highest level of funding.
100. Over the past year, the budget difficulties have come to a head with the local education authority making it clear that any further planned overspend would be unacceptable. Over a long period of time, the headteacher has analysed the budget carefully and presented a number of models to demonstrate spending patterns and the likely effects of cuts to class sizes, the number of teaching staff or to the courses offered. Although this information has been considered it has not until recently been acted upon and consequently the school now has a deficit of nearly £200,000. A recovery plan has been agreed with the local education authority and providing that pupil intake numbers are as predicted, and the staffing structure is re-organised, the budget is planned to be back in balance in five years.
101. The senior administrative manager works very closely with the governing body and senior managers to ensure that all expenditure is carefully considered. The school is now in a precarious position whereby it cannot afford to make the wrong financial decisions. Therefore all decisions

have to be carefully weighed to ensure that spending will ultimately benefit pupils. The auditor's report was satisfactory and all recommendations have been acted on.

102. Resources received for specific purposes have been used appropriately. They have in several instances brought clear benefits to pupils and staff, such as funding to help manage behaviour in Year 7. Financial control and administration is very thorough. The budget is carefully interrogated and the full governing body is now taking responsibility for monitoring and profiling income and expenditure.
103. The concept of best value is understood but the school does not challenge itself sufficiently well to improve performance. It has used a good range of data to predict the outcomes of individual pupils' performance and target-setting procedures are good. As yet, the school has not set explicit targets for subjects to reach by the end of Year 9 and Year 11, and the full potential for the use of comparative data has not been exploited.
104. The school administrative procedures are very good. Non-teaching staff are led and managed very well. They have very clear procedures for the way they work and consequently provide a very good service to the school reducing much of the bureaucracy that would take up senior staff time. Some of the demands made for statistical information are considered to be duplicated, but the school deals with this well by using centrally-held computerized information.
105. Overall, the match of teachers to the demands of the curriculum is satisfactory. The school is almost fully staffed with permanent specialist teachers. However, the school does not always attract a good field of high-quality applicants from which to choose for posts. At the time of the inspection there was a vacancy for a co-ordinator for information and communication technology. At present, a few subjects such as science rely on teachers teaching their second subjects. The covering of staff absence is a major problem for the school as supply teachers of the appropriate quality and specialisms are not always available. Forty-seven staff have been appointed and 35 have left over the last two years, with the extra staff being appointed as the school increased in size. This has enabled the governors to provide the school with a better balance of experienced longer-serving teachers, recently-appointed experienced staff and those more recently qualified. Technical staff undertake a valuable role in assisting and supporting the teaching of the curriculum in science, information and communication technology and design and technology. The administrative staff, learning support assistants and site management staff make a significant contribution to the smooth day-to-day running of the school.
106. Very good arrangements are in place for the induction of newly-qualified teachers and teachers new to the school. They receive very effective mentoring and departmental support and in addition have school-based training on a wide range of relevant whole-school topics. The school has good procedures in place for supporting the professional development of teachers. Evaluation and feedback systems ensure that the school receives good value for money from the courses attended by its teachers. Priority is appropriately given to training linked to the school development plan, departmental plans and performance management. The school has taken a very positive approach to performance management and procedures are very good. All staff have targets, except those appointed recently, and performance management is having a positive impact on the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. The school has received a national award for its training and staff development procedures, for a second time.
107. The sufficiency of learning resources is broadly satisfactory across the school. Resources are good in geography and music. However, in mathematics, science and modern languages, there are insufficient textbooks to meet the needs of the curriculum; this was raised as an issue at the time of the last inspection. There has been a significant improvement in the number of computers with the recent addition of a fourth computer suite. All teachers now have access to computers to support their lessons. However, information and communication technology is not being used well to support learning in subjects. All departments have access to overhead projectors, televisions and video recorders.
108. Although the library is small, it provides a good resource for staff, pupils and students in the main school and in the sixth form. There is a good range of quality reference books and a wide selection of both classical and light literature. Additionally, there is a section devoted to magazines and

newspapers, which enables pupils and students to keep up to date with current affairs. One section of the library is devoted to careers, and there is a good range of career information leaflets, books and job descriptions. Three networked computers situated in this area allow students and pupils opportunities for private study and also provide privacy for those wishing to use the computer careers programmes. The pleasant study area is well maintained and attractively decorated with the promotional posters, which encourages library users to borrow the latest books.

109. The library is very well managed by a qualified librarian, who takes great pride in her work. All loans and returns are well documented through a computerized system, which allows the librarian to calculate how many people have used the facility over a period of time. For example, approximately half of all pupils, students and staff regularly borrow books at least once a month. The library is also a meeting centre for some after-school clubs, which encourages pupils into the library and reinforces their familiarity with books. Where books are not in stock, the librarian uses her very good links with libraries in two counties to request the loan of topic boxes.
110. Overall, the standard of accommodation is good. There has been significant internal building work in recent years to accommodate the rise in student numbers. The most recent phase has just been completed and includes enhanced specialist areas for information and communication technology, a new multi-functional hall and adaptations to improve accommodation in drama. Improvements also include new administration offices and a welcoming reception area. The current building programme is scheduled for completion during the spring term and will provide high-quality music practice rooms and a new dance studio. The library lacks the space to cope with pupil numbers at peak times. The narrowness of some corridors causes congestion at peak movement times and encourages some misbehaviour, but this is minimised by the creation of a one-way system. Drainage on the sports pitches remains a problem and changing room space is tight. Good departmental organisation in a high proportion of subject areas is aided by the close grouping of teaching rooms. The school provides very good access for wheelchair-bound pupils and community users.
111. Overall, improvements to the way the school is led and managed have been satisfactory since the last inspection. Three of the key issues from the previous inspection have been addressed with good improvements to the quality of teaching, behaviour management and the quality of leadership of middle managers. The fourth issue of providing an act of daily collective worship and religious education in the sixth form has not been dealt with. The trend of improvement for GCSE results has been below that nationally and boys' standards and achievements are very much lower than those of girls. On balance, improvement has been satisfactory but these have been achieved with a growing budget deficit. The school is therefore considered to give unsatisfactory value for money.

## **Sixth form**

### ***Leadership and management***

112. Leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory. On a daily basis, management is good. At present, there is a lack of clear written direction for the future of the sixth form and the courses that will be provided. Principles are known and shared but they are not made explicit in any of the school's records of meetings. The governors and senior managers give high priority to providing educational opportunities to students who could well be lost to education from the age of 16. In this respect, the school does a very good job as it tailors the combination of courses each year to meet the needs of its students. Whilst this provides student satisfaction and allows students to achieve results they can feel proud of, it is not an efficient way to organize provision.
113. The vocational courses are popular and provide well for students. They are well led and managed with good advice and support. AS-level and A-level courses are also well organized but apart from English, the numbers in groups are very small, and they do not provide an efficient use of staffing, nor do they provide the stimulation of debate that larger numbers create. The key skills course has been re-organised this year as the school recognized that the lack of overall management led to students not completing their portfolios and therefore not receiving certificates.

114. Each year the school estimates the cost of sixth-form provision with the intention that it does not drain the resources intended for the main school. Previously, the sixth form has been self-sufficient but with the new funding arrangements this year, the sixth-form budget has had to be supplemented from that of the main school to keep an appropriate level of provision. The governing body is aware of the situation and discussions are already underway to minimize chance of this subsidy occurring again.
115. A greater share of the budget is spent on providing staffing for sixth-form courses than is received as income. However, the quality of teaching is good and reflects the appropriateness of match of specialist teachers to courses. Sixth-form teachers have the same support and development as all teachers in the school; this is very good.
116. Adequate learning resources are available to meet the needs of sixth-form students in most subject areas. There are good resources to support learning in information and communication technology, and these are very good in health and social care. Post-16 students also share resources with the main school and make good use of the computer suites and library facilities to enhance their studies.
117. Overall, the standard of accommodation is satisfactory. The quality of provision is good in English literature, mathematics, leisure and tourism, health and social care and physical education. The shortage of specialist sixth-form accommodation in business studies and art and design makes provision in these subjects unsatisfactory. Accommodation in the sixth-form area includes a small private study room, information and technology area and common room; these are well used and well respected by students.
118. The sixth form operates at a satisfactory level. Students are able to follow courses that help to prepare them for either going into employment, or further or higher education. For this year, the sixth form is receiving a small amount of funding from the main school but as it fills an important role in the community, and enables students to achieve as they should, it can be considered to give value for money and to be broadly cost-effective.



## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

119. In order to meet the school's targets and to improve the quality of pupils' work, the headteacher, senior managers and the governing body should take a rigorous approach to:

- (1) Raise the standards attained by all pupils in modern foreign languages and of boys throughout the school by:
  - improving the quality of teaching in French and Spanish;
  - developing pupils' writing skills by adopting a common approach across subjects;
  - improving the accuracy of teachers' assessments in Years 7 to 9 and using the information gained to monitor progress;
  - setting clear targets for each subject;
  - monitoring progress towards these targets through clearly focused and recorded line management meetings;(See paragraphs 2, 3, 4, 5, 10, 35, 52, 82, 96, 103, 127, 140, 149, 170, 179, 191, 198, 200, 201, 203, 204, 222, 223)
- (2) Improve the provision and co-ordination of information and communication technology and develop pupils' skills more systematically across subjects of the curriculum by:
  - securing a curriculum leader and improving leadership and management;
  - teaching all elements of the National Curriculum in Years 10 and 11;
  - ensuring that all subjects fulfill National Curriculum requirements;
  - assessing and recording pupils' progress regularly.(See paragraphs 12, 47, 107, 144, 157, 168, 174, 189, 190, 197, 206, 211, 217, 218, 225)
- (3) Improve the behaviour of pupils\* by:
  - using those teachers who have excellent skills as role models for all teachers;
  - continuing to implement the behaviour policy and strategies;
  - taking firm action with those pupils who disrupt the learning of others;
  - offering alternative curricular provision in Years 10 and 11 that better suit the learning needs of pupils.(See paragraphs 19, 20, 21, 30, 33, 69, 77, 88, 94, 128, 157, 162, 195, 204)
- (4) Implement the agreed recovery plan to ensure that the budget deficit is reduced.  
(See paragraphs 93, 100, 111)

\*Denotes that this item is identified in the school's development plan.

The following weaknesses should also be considered for in the school's action plan: provision of a daily act of collective worship (see paragraphs 68, 72, 99); setting homework consistently (see paragraphs 33, 88, 189, 206, 225); improving pupils' presentation of work and teachers' marking (see paragraphs 33, 140, 150, 177, 181, 196, 225); reviewing provision in mathematics and science in classes where there is a wide range of attainment (see paragraphs 140, 147).

### Sixth form

120. To ensure that the community and students are well served by the school's sixth form the school should:

- (1) Agree and adopt a strategic plan that complements local provision and offers an appropriate and viable range of courses for students.  
(See paragraphs 66, 112, 114)
- (2) Develop opportunities for students to learn to work independently by:
  - sharing the good practice found in vocational courses;
  - enhancing the induction period and incorporating study skills;
  - reinforcing learning in the key skills course across all other courses.(See paragraphs 42, 62, 66, 86, 237, 246, 270, 274)
- (3) Provide a planned and co-ordinated programme of activities to promote students' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development and include religious education.  
(See paragraphs 44, 63, 73)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	148
	Sixth form	42
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		58

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
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#### Years 7 – 11

Number	5	14	69	50	7	3	0
Percentage	3	9	47	34	5	2	0

#### Sixth form

Number	1	13	20	7	1	0	0
Percentage	2	31	48	17	2	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting the percentages for the sixth form as each lesson represents more than two percentage points.

### Information about the school's pupils

#### Pupils on the school's roll

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1008	106
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	62	4

#### Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	30	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	228	6

#### English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	19

#### Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	43
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	49

## Attendance

### Authorised absence

%

### Unauthorised absence

%

School data	9.7		School data	0.9
National comparative data	9.1		National comparative data	1.1

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 (Year 9)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	108	101	209

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	43 (48)	61 (58)	66 (54)
	Girls	78 (72)	58 (55)	53(59)
	Total	121 (122)	119 (113)	119 (113)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	58 (66)	57 (62)	57 (62)
	National	66 (66)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	21 (28)	32 (40)	18 (22)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	61 (44)	66 (59)	65 (54)
	Girls	76 (74)	60 (57)	64 (59)
	Total	137 (124)	126 (116)	129 (102)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	66 (67)	60 (63)	62 (56)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	27 (24)	23 (36)	18 (20)
	National	33 (31)	44 (42)	34 (33)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 (Year 11)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	101	103	204

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	22 (31)	89 (105)	95
	Girls	47 (48)	97 (86)	100
	Total	69 (79)	186 (191)	195
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	33.8 (38)	91.2 (91)	95.6 (98)
	National	51.2 (48)	86.8 (91)	94.6 (96)

*Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.*

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	35.6 (36.5)
	National	N/a (39)

Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	32	62.5 (N/a)
	National		N/a

**Attainment at the end of the sixth form (Year 13)**

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	9	19	28
	Average point score per candidate	138.9	164.7	156.4
National	Average point score per candidate	N/a	N/a	N/a

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All	Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	6	16	22	9	11	20
	Average point score per candidate	65	135.6	116.4	95.6	87.3	91
National	Average point score per candidate	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a

Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

**Ethnic background of pupils**

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British - Indian
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
Black or Black British – Caribbean
Black or Black British – African
Black or Black British – any other Black background
Chinese
Any other ethnic group
No ethnic group recorded

**Exclusions in the last school year**

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
971	37	1
0	0	0
29	1	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
2	0	0
1	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
3	0	0
4	0	0
3	0	0
2	0	0
90	0	0
0	7	0

The table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

**Teachers and classes**

**Qualified teachers and classes: Y 7 – Y13**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	61.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.1

**Education support staff: Y7 – Y13**

Total number of education support staff	16
Total aggregate hours worked per week	489

**Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	73.9
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**Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	28
Key Stage 4	25

FTE means full-time equivalent.

**Financial information**

Financial year	2001-2
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	£
Total income	3140174
Total expenditure	3222152
Expenditure per pupil	2851
Balance brought forward from previous year	-53543
Balance carried forward to next year	-135521

**Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	34.8
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	46.6
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	2.4
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	2.4
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

**Results of the survey of parents and carers**

**Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	1114
Number of questionnaires returned	177

**Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	29	58	7	5	1
My child is making good progress in school.	20	61	10	6	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	9	43	29	9	11
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	11	53	23	12	1
The teaching is good.	9	62	17	5	8
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	10	40	33	9	8
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	30	52	11	3	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	23	58	11	5	2
The school works closely with parents.	10	43	31	7	10
The school is well led and managed.	11	49	16	10	14
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	16	60	12	5	7
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	28	51	9	3	9



## **PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4**

At the time of writing, national comparative data are not available for 2002 for all secondary schools or for secondary modern schools. Therefore comparisons cannot be made for Year 9 or Year 11.

### **ENGLISH**

Overall, the quality of provision in English is **good**.

#### **Strengths**

- Good teaching and pupil management, leading to good learning and positive attitudes to learning.
- The curriculum manager provides a very good model of effective classroom practice.
- Good management and leadership have led to clear improvements and greater consistency of practice since the last inspection.

#### **Areas for improvement**

- Wider use of information and communication technology to develop literacy skills.
- Closer liaison with special needs teachers to develop pupils' literacy more efficiently.

121. Results overall in the 2002 end of Year 9 national tests were below average compared with those for all schools nationally. Taking into consideration the low scores attained in Year 6 tests, particularly for writing, achievement is as might be expected. Since 1998, results have varied with a marked decline in 1999 and 2000. Results for 2001 were in line with national averages for all schools and above the average for secondary modern schools. Boys' attainment is below that of girls.
122. GCSE results for 2002 at grades A\* to C in both English and English literature were also below the national average for all schools. In 2001, results were close to the national average for all schools in both English and English literature and above the national averages for secondary modern schools. There are marked differences between the attainment of boys and girls. Girls' results for 2001 were above the national average for all schools; boys' results were well below the national average. Girls' achievement is good. Boys' achievement is just satisfactory considering their previously low attainment at the end of Year 9. There is no significant difference in the performance of pupils from different ethnic backgrounds.
123. Standards of speaking and listening overall are average. In Years 7 to 9 pupils speak clearly in whole-class and small group discussion, listening well to each other and respecting different opinions. They usually present ideas confidently to the rest of the class; for example, Year 7 pupils explaining the badges they had designed to illustrate their names and interests. When encouraged to do so, they use vocabulary precisely, use personal anecdotes or refer to their own reading to justify a point of view, and develop an argument. In Years 10 and 11, standards of attainment are often dependent on teachers' expectations. Pupils contribute well to discussion when the teacher employs strategies to include and stimulate all pupils. The contribution of lower-attaining pupils is particularly good in some lessons where pupils are encouraged to elaborate an opinion and to use vocabulary precisely. Attainment in GCSE oral tasks is above average.
124. Standards of reading are at least average in English lessons and often good. Most pupils in Years 7 to 9 enjoy reading, both from class novels and from their own choice of texts. They are willing to read aloud, which many do clearly and expressively. They can understand nuance and can predict outcomes based on their initial reading. For example, Year 9 pupils understood the underlying menace created in a short story by Roald Dahl and could refer to the text to justify their opinions. Year 10 and 11 pupils are able to recognise and comment upon rhetorical devices as used in a political speech, or presentational and persuasive devices used in advertisements. They show good understanding of characterisation and themes in literature. They are also able to skim and scan through texts to select appropriate references. All pupils show a developing appreciation of fiction, non-fiction, poetry and media texts although lower-attaining pupils tend to describe rather than analyse what they read.

125. Overall, standards of writing in English are near average by the end of Year 9 and Year 11 in English but vary in other years; they are not as high as those for reading. Year 9 pupils show clear improvement in writing more complex sentences, using more sophisticated connectives to link sentences and organising both narrative and argument coherently. Average-attaining pupils write fluently but spelling is weaker and they use colloquial language inappropriately. Lower-attaining pupils write enthusiastically with improving sentence punctuation but their writing contains far more spelling and grammar errors. Some average and lower-attaining pupils in Year 8 are not presenting their work carefully, sometimes confusing small and capital letters, not using joined-up handwriting and sometimes writing in pencil. Year 7 pupils are already demonstrating noticeably better organisation and sentence variation.
126. By Year 11 the writing of all pupils is well organised and quite fluent. Higher-attaining pupils can clearly argue and sustain a point of view, making good use of data and presentational devices in discursive writing. They are able to employ a range of styles for different purposes with increasing fluency and accuracy. Average-attaining pupils are able to interest and engage a reader, developing ideas at length and with increasing accuracy. They are less secure when writing formally, sometimes using colloquialisms inappropriately. Lower-attaining pupils show improvements in the length, ambition and organisation of their writing but spelling and grammar is still inaccurate.
127. Across the school, standards of literacy are average for speaking and listening and reading. They are below average for writing, especially so for boys. Poor presentation and weaknesses in spelling, punctuation and grammar are lowering achievement.
128. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour in English lessons are generally good. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Where there is encouragement and opportunity for involvement, pupils respond well. On the few occasions where a few pupils try to distract others, it is handled firmly.
129. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and ranges from satisfactory to excellent in Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11. Learning objectives are made very clear. They are explained and shared with pupils at the start of lessons and reinforced at the end. Another particular strength of the best teaching lies in the range of strategies employed to ensure the active participation and learning of all pupils. For example, in an excellent Year 9 lesson the teacher's encouragement, skilful and sensitive questioning and clear expectation that all pupils should participate, ensured that all pupils felt secure and that their contributions were valued. The ensuing discussion around the novel "Stone Cold", informed by earlier reading and the pupils' own research on homelessness, was of high quality. Pupils with special educational needs and prior low attainment described one main character as 'calculating', 'a sociopath', 'discharged from the army on medical grounds'. In other lessons, Year 7 pupils were actively involved through brainstorming, discussing and prioritising in pairs previously prepared provocative statements on disability. Year 8 pupils were challenged to read information and highlight evidence that they might use in their own writing on corporal punishment. Another positive feature of effective teaching is the support and structures provided to prepare pupils to write. In an excellent Year 11 lesson where pupils were considering whether mobile phones were a blessing or a curse, the teacher had demonstrated how ideas could be organised into paragraphs on the whiteboard. He also encouraged pupils to make notes based on personal experience and knowledge gained from television programmes, newspaper articles and advertisements. For lower-attaining pupils, guidance on writing was provided. Consequently they were all very well prepared to start writing independently.
130. Where teaching is less effective, instructions and expectations are not always clear. For example, in two lessons pupils were uncertain whether the teacher wanted them to write a plan in note form, or a draft in continuous prose. Sometimes there is not a clear enough expectation of all pupils to participate in discussion, or where only a few contribute, a variation of activity to include more. Occasionally pupils require more time to re-read a text and reflect so that they can make considered rather than immediate but superficial responses. Not all teachers follow the best practice in the department where pupils can experience a stimulating and highly-enjoyable dramatised, shared reading of a text. Satisfactory opportunities are provided for pupils to use information and communication technology and some good examples of pupils' word processing and desktop publishing work were seen. These opportunities are not extended far enough to capitalise on the increased motivation and interest in media that pupils are developing.

131. Leadership and management are good. The curriculum manager provides a very good role model for classroom practice. Marking of pupils' work is detailed and helpful. Although the departmental assessment policy is not applied completely consistently, key work is graded according to National Curriculum levels and pupils are given clear targets for improvement. There is some excellent teaching of pupils with special educational needs within English lessons. However, some special educational needs pupils are being withdrawn from one out of three English lessons each week. This is not efficient literacy support. It is also important that there is closer communication between special needs teachers, the inclusion manager and English teachers on the use of the literacy progress units so that 'catch-up' work can be reinforced in English lessons.
132. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Detailed schemes of work have incorporated the National Literacy Strategy framework and ensure a much greater consistency of approach. There is good monitoring of classroom practice and of the standards of pupils' work. There is a clear improvement plan and evidence during the inspection suggests that this is already having an effect, for example in improving writing in English lessons and boys' achievement. All of these contribute to good improvement since the previous inspection. There have also been significant changes in teaching personnel. Every class is now taught by an English specialist and only two classes are shared between teachers.

### **Drama**

133. Standards in drama are above average, with examples of very good performance skills. Results in GCSE examinations are consistently above the average for all schools, with about one third of pupils entered attaining A\* or A grades. Fewer boys than girls opt for the subject in Years 10 and 11. Although girls' attainment is generally higher, some boys achieve the highest grades. Attainment is more mixed in Years 7 to 9 and ranges from average to well above average. Achievement is good across the school from pupils of all levels of attainment, including those pupils with special educational needs.
134. In Years 7 to 9, pupils participate in lessons with varying degrees of self-discipline and self-control. Where attainment is high, for example in a Year 8 class following the theme of "The Way West", all pupils employed a range of dramatic techniques including freeze-frames, narration and improvisation. They used stage blocks, lighting and props inventively and their performance was disciplined and expressive. Pupils worked collaboratively in quite large groups, negotiating tasks and roles efficiently. Consequently they could all, in a comparatively short space of time, prepare a brief but expressive performance illustrating the arrival of pioneer settlers at Fort Laramie. Pupils listen very attentively and work well as a critical audience, showing sensitive appreciation and commenting constructively on each other's performance. As a result, even in lessons where performance is less disciplined and pupils are slower to respond to instructions, they are able to recognise and identify for themselves areas for development.
135. Teaching is good overall; it ranges from good to excellent. Teachers have very high expectations and their teaching is stimulating and challenging. Pupils understand criteria for success and are well equipped to self-evaluate, which they are expected to do continuously through discussion and through written evaluations in their journals. Very good opportunities are also provided for pupils to research the background to the topics they are following. For example, Year 8 pupils had researched the historical background to the Oregon Trail and settlers in the United States of America, while Year 9 pupils had researched *Commedia dell'Arte*.
136. The culmination of excellent teaching and learning was evident in a Year 11 lesson where all pupils had prepared individual, related dramatic monologues around the theme of the First World War. Starting with an initial stimulus of the song: 'The Green Fields of France' and some newspaper articles, they were able to produce a moving and highly expressive ensemble performance. Every student was able both to perform an individual monologue, for example as a soldier enlisting, a wife left at home or a wounded soldier, and to take on other roles in support. Their performances showed their ability to use a range of dramatic devices and to sustain a role, communicating character and feeling through speech, facial expression, gesture and movement. They responded very well to cues and moved slickly through changes of scene. Higher-attaining pupils had researched and prepared their roles well. Lower-attaining pupils relied less on preparation and

research and more on improvisation, but they recognised the benefits of more thorough preparation. The overall performance was very well constructed and very evocative.

137. The subject makes an important contribution to pupils' social and cultural development with good opportunities to participate in extra-curricular activities. The curriculum manager for performing arts recently took on her role and she is already showing that she clearly has good ideas for developing the subject further.

## MATHEMATICS

Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- Lessons are well planned, structured and organised; this helps pupils to learn effectively.
- Relationships between pupils and teachers are good; teachers give good individual support, which builds pupils' confidence.
- Starter activities are used effectively, both for practice of mental calculation skills and for settling pupils to work quickly.
- Assessment information is used well to track pupils' progress and to support their learning.

### Areas for improvement

- Standards of presentation are too varied; in general, pupils' written work does not support future revision and learning.
- Information and communication technology is not used sufficiently well to support learning.
- Current provision does not meet the needs of higher and lower-attaining pupils in Year 7.

138. Results overall in the 2002 Year 9 national tests were below average when compared with those for all schools nationally; performance was similar to that in English and science. Overall, pupils achieved as might be expected, given their Year 6 national tests scores on entry. Since 1998, results have varied. There has been no consistent trend of improvement or any significant difference in results for boys and girls.
139. GCSE results in 2002 at grades A\* to C were also below the national average for all schools. There is as yet no data to allow further comparison of the 2002 results with either all schools, or with similar schools nationally. In 2001, results were below average in relation to all schools, but they were broadly in line with those for secondary modern schools. Pupils did less well in mathematics than in some of the other subjects they took, including English and science. Nevertheless, pupils' achievements were just satisfactory given their attainment in their 1999 Year 9 tests. GCSE results have improved over the past three years. There has been no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls or of pupils from different ethnic backgrounds.
140. Work seen during the inspection confirms that standards are below average overall in both Year 9 and Year 11. Pupils in top sets cope confidently with a range of mathematical techniques and achieve well. For example, Year 9 pupils were able to calculate the area of complex circular shapes confidently and accurately. Higher-attaining pupils in Year 11 demonstrated high standards of mental calculation. In other sets, although standards of work are usually below those expected for pupils' age, achievement is satisfactory overall. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make appropriate progress. However, there is some underachievement in Year 7, since the work set is often too easy or too hard for higher and lower-attaining pupils in sets where there is a very wide range of prior attainment. There is also some underachievement in a few middle and lower sets where, in spite of teachers' efforts, immature attitudes and silly behaviour cause low-level disruption to learning. In addition, standards of presentation are too varied. Much written work is disorganized and untidy and does not support future revision and learning.
141. Standards are below average in most aspects of mathematics, including numeracy. Pupils are reasonably competent with written arithmetic. Most have adequate knowledge of tables and other number facts; higher-attaining pupils are competent and confident with mental calculation. Standards of statistical work are broadly average. When required to do so, pupils can use and

apply their mathematical skills; most cope reasonably well with the numerical demands of other subjects. However, as yet, there is no whole-school approach to the teaching of numeracy.

142. Overall, teaching is satisfactory; it is often good and sometimes very good or excellent. Lessons are well planned, structured and organised, with clear learning outcomes which are discussed well with pupils. Thus, pupils understand what they are expected to do and what they are expected to learn. Effective use is made of short, 'starter' activities; pupils settle to work quickly and consolidate previous learning. Learning is summarised well at the end of lessons. In general, teachers have good subject knowledge. They give clear explanations and good support to individuals; this helps pupils to understand mathematical ideas and builds their confidence. In almost all lessons, there are good relationships between pupils and teachers; good humour is a feature of many lessons. In the best lessons, pupils are enabled to learn at a fast rate; they are given a series of tasks with clear time targets. For example, in a Year 10 lesson, higher-attaining pupils worked hard and productively throughout; the teacher intervened at appropriate intervals to check progress and to refocus learning. In the few lessons where learning was unsatisfactory, pupils did not do enough work to make satisfactory progress in learning.
143. The curriculum manager and the assistant curriculum manager collectively provide good leadership and management. There is a clear focus on improving teaching and learning and on raising standards; teachers know where the department is heading and what is needed for improvement. Teaching is monitored and developed effectively, resulting in a common approach to lessons across the department. At present, monitoring and analysis of past examination and test results is less useful; it does not identify accurately enough strengths and weaknesses in performance. The department is well organised; there is good guidance for teachers through effective medium and short-term curricular planning. The department uses assessment information well to monitor and support pupils' progress. Pupils know their targets for national tests and examinations; they also know the level of their current work. The department is starting to ensure that pupils know what they must do to mathematically to bridge the gap between current and predicted grades.
144. Improvement since the last inspection has been good overall. GCSE results have risen by around ten per cent over the past three years. The implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy has started to raise expectations in Years 7 to 9. The department has addressed one of the two issues from the last report; there are now appropriate opportunities for pupils to develop their mental calculation skills, largely through the use of starter activities. The department is aware that the use of information and communication technology to support learning in mathematics remains an issue that needs to be resolved. In addition, resources for teaching are unsatisfactory. There are insufficient textbooks for pupils to have their own copy; this makes the setting of homework more difficult than it need be.

## SCIENCE

Overall, the quality of provision in science is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- A committed, hard-working and mutually-supportive teaching team is well led by the head of department.
- Good lesson planning with clear statement of objectives to be covered during lessons.
- An effective performance tracking system is used to chart pupils' progress.
- Very good and effective technical support provided by laboratory assistants.

#### Areas for improvement

- Too few opportunities are provided for pupils to develop analytical and evaluative skills, particularly in Years 10 and 11.
- The proportion of higher GCSE grades attained by boys could be higher.
- The use of information and communication technology at all levels needs to be increased.
- Performance data are not used as effectively as they could be to raise standards.

145. In national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2002, levels attained were below those nationally. Teacher assessments at Level 5 slightly overestimated attainment compared with their test results, but were in close agreement at Level 6. Over the last three years, standards of attainment have shown a slight increase in line with national trends. Attainment in science at Level 5 is similar to that achieved in English and mathematics, but below both these subjects at Level 6. Pupils enter the school with levels of attainment broadly in line with national averages. Comparison of attainment as pupils enter the school and at the end of Year 9 shows that pupils' achievement is satisfactory. There was no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls.
146. Pupils are entered for the double award GCSE examination. In 2002, GCSE results were below the national average for all schools. However, all pupils obtained grades within the A\* to G range. The proportion of pupils achieving A\* to C grades in 2002 was similar to that in 2001 and significantly above that for 2000. Girls significantly outperformed boys. Attainment in science is similar to that in mathematics, but below that achieved in English. Achievement is satisfactory given their attainment in the Year 9 tests.
147. Work seen during the inspection confirmed that standards attained by the end of Year 9 are below average but in line with the national test results. Year 7 pupils make good use of their information and communication skills to research the Internet and prepare multimedia presentations on the solar system. Good observational skills were seen in a Year 8 class recording the results of an experiment growing micro-organisms. They are able to distinguish between bacteria and fungi and note differences between bacterial colonies grown on an agar plate; they have some appreciation of the size of bacteria and the numbers in a colony. By Year 9, pupils can set up an experiment to test factors controlling rusting of iron. They understand the importance of controlling variables in experimental investigations, but because of poor factual recall have difficulty in predicting the likely outcome. They can follow instructions and handle laboratory equipment satisfactorily. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, in Years 7 to 9 show satisfactory achievement. However, the wide range of attainment in Year 9 classes is impacting on standards and achievement as teachers' time is spread too thinly with different attainers in these classes.
148. Scrutiny of written work and lesson observation shows that by the end of Year 11 standards are below average. Year 10 pupils studying radioactivity understand the difference between the types of radiation and the importance of monitoring background radiation. However, lower-attaining pupils from this year group have difficulty in relating  $\alpha$  and  $\beta$  radiation to atomic structure. Year 11 pupils revising for a module examination showed that their knowledge of the facts was satisfactory, but had difficulty in applying this knowledge to analytical and predictive questions. The coursework from both years shows that pupils have good planning and observational skills in a range of experiments. They are able to measure differences in the rate of a reaction, such as hydrochloric acid and calcium carbonate, in response to changes in concentration or particle size. Similar investigations study enzyme reactions and Hooke's law. Pupils, however, have difficulty in analysing and evaluating their experimental results. Powers of recall and the ability to relate facts to concepts are not sufficiently developed. There is some evidence of word-processing being used in coursework, but none to show that information and communication skills are used to produce graphs. Pupils' achievement is broadly satisfactory as they make steady progress from through Years 10 and 11.
149. Teaching is satisfactory with a significant proportion that is good. In Years 7 to 9, teaching was good in nearly half the lessons seen. Teachers are secure in their knowledge of the subject and they make good use of limited resources. They know their pupils well, especially those with special needs. Good pupil-teacher relationships, particularly in Years 7 and 11, enhance pupils' progress. This encourages good attitudes so that in some classes pupils are attentive, co-operative and appear keen to learn and make progress. Lessons are well planned, have clear

objectives and conducted at a suitable pace, though insufficient use is made of extension material, particularly in setting homework, to ensure all pupils are fully stretched. Pupils respond and learn well when stimulated, particularly in lessons where they are engaged in a variety of activities and working in groups and when teachers have high expectation of what they can do. For example, in a Year 8 class pupils competed to produce the best poster highlighting the scientific basis for personal hygiene. Teachers' class management skills are sound and they make good use of the school's strategy for behaviour management. However, there are some classes where a significant minority of pupils chatter and show little commitment, resulting in poor progress for the class as a whole.

150. Standards of marking and commentary in notebooks are variable, but pupils understand the grading system and can relate performance to their target grades. While teachers' comments tend to be too brief, helpful and positive examples were seen in notebooks and coursework from all year groups. The presentation and organisation of written work is satisfactory and in many cases, good. Pupils appreciate the time teachers are willing to give in assisting them out of school and in organising the extra-curricular science club. It is this support which will enable some higher-attaining pupils in Year 11 to take GCSE in the three separate sciences.
151. The department is well led and managed. Aims are clear and staff work well as a team with a shared commitment to ensure pupils achieve as well as possible. In particular, the high level of support from specialist members of the department enables non-specialist teachers to teach effectively in Years 7 to 9. A thorough record of pupil performance is in place, but the information is not used as effectively as it could be to raise pupils' attainment. Teaching is effectively underpinned by first-class support from an efficient and dedicated technician team. With the exception of information and communication technology, resources are satisfactory for teaching the curriculum.
152. Since the last report improvements have been satisfactory. Much work has gone into revising schemes of work, resulting in the improved quality of teaching. There is less disruptive behaviour in class, allowing better progress to be achieved. Teachers set different work to suit pupils learning needs but there is scope for further development, particularly in homework. Levels of attainment, while improving at GCSE, are below those nationally and pupils could achieve more. There is still a lack of information and communication technology hardware and software within the department. There are now sufficient laboratories for science to be taught, though some further refurbishment is necessary to bring all rooms up to a satisfactory standard.

## ART AND DESIGN

Overall, the quality of provision in art and design is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- Teachers' enthusiasm for their subject and their commitment helps pupils achieve to learn well.
- Thoughtful lesson planning, well-organised resources, and informative displays create an effective learning environment.

### Areas for improvement

- Standards need to be raised further through curriculum development, and the matching of objectives more closely to individual needs.
- Procedures for assessment, self-evaluation, target-setting, and the tracking of progress could be used more effectively.
- Information and communication technology resources need to be developed and used to meet National Curriculum requirements, and to further increase learning opportunities.

153. The end of Year 9 teacher assessments for 2001 and 2002 show above-average results, for both boys and girls, with a slight improvement in 2002 on the previous year. Inspection findings indicate that these assessments were too generous. GCSE results in 2002 were well below the national average for all secondary schools, with very few pupils gaining the higher grades. However, the proportion of A\* to C grades gained in 2001 was very close to the national average, and showed a rising trend of improvement since the last inspection. The difference between boys' and girls' test and examination results is similar to that nationally, with girls attaining considerably better

standards than boys. Achievement overall is satisfactory, although there is some underachievement, notably in Year 11.

154. Work seen in sketch books and in folders shows that overall achievement and progress are satisfactory given the broadly average standards in the subject on entry to the school. Standards at the end of Year 9 are average overall. Pupils with special educational needs, and higher-attaining pupils, make satisfactory progress. Year 7 pupils investigate materials and images and learn about the art elements. Their work on line, tone, pattern, and texture shows good understanding of the visual and tactile qualities of a range of art media. For example, they make careful rubbings of different surfaces around the art room and combine these with words, to form lively collages that illustrate the properties of various textures. Year 8 pupils study the work of Picasso and use self-portraits well, as a basis for work in his Cubist style. In a Year 9 lesson, most pupils made well-observed drawings of bicycle parts. They manipulated these images, and developed interesting ideas for abstract compositions in the manner of Mondrian. The best work showed good analysis and evaluation of abstraction, and an understanding of how contrasting shapes and colours could be used to make a balanced design. Less well-produced work was seen in Year 9, where pupils making masks in the African style showed poor productivity and needed considerable help to adapt and refine their work.
155. Work seen confirmed that standards are below average in Years 10 and 11. Overall, achievement is satisfactory but there are weak areas of progress and learning. Highest standards are achieved where work is individually expressive, colour is used discriminately, and ideas are based on direct observational drawings. Weaker work is insufficiently researched and documented, and lacks commitment; this is a factor leading to underachievement. Many pupils rely too heavily on photographs for ideas. However, good use is made of mixed media by Year 11 pupils, in abstract and semi-abstract images developed from studies of Egyptian and Aboriginal art and culture. Weaker work is insufficiently based on direct observation, and inadequately annotated to show the development of ideas. For many pupils the personal research of other artists' work is too superficial, and few use the styles and techniques of other artists to help develop their own work. Overall productivity and presentation standards are below expectation for the GCSE course, and a relatively large number of pupils are not meeting coursework requirements. Pupils' knowledge of the examination specification and assessment criteria is also below average. A minority of pupils in Year 10 show originality and imagination in the design and construction of striking 'tower' sculptures. Their designs are developed from detailed drawings of fruits and vegetables and are based on informed studies of the architecture of Gaudi.
156. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen and teaching was often good. The satisfactory teaching often had good features. The best lessons were well planned to cover National Curriculum requirements, with learning concepts taught in sequence. In these lessons, interesting resources, including references to well-known artists and art movements, are carefully prepared; subject material is appropriate to pupils' needs, and there is extension work for the higher-attainers. Teaching is good where pupils are helped to acquire skills through well-presented demonstrations and knowledgeable explanations of the aims of art movements, as in a Year 9 lesson on 'moving from realism to abstraction'. In the most successful lessons learning is promoted and reinforced through good introductions, with clear objectives, and questioning that is effectively matched to individual pupils' needs; plenary summaries are evaluative, and pupils are asked what they have learnt. This was evident in a Year 7 lesson on textures, where the teacher directed questions to specific pupils during the lesson summary, and evaluated their practical work. This consolidated learning and helped pupils to make links between the visual and the spoken language.
157. Teachers establish good working relationship in lessons and promote good attitudes in pupils; these are fostered through mutual interest in the subject. Boys and girls generally work well together. Pupils at all levels of attainment respect each other's ideas, beliefs, and values. The majority of pupils enjoy the subject and are keen to be creative, especially those with special needs, who learn well through investigating and exploring art media. However, teachers do not use a wide range of strategies to provide for the learning of those pupils with special educational needs or those who are gifted or talented. Opportunities for pupils to contribute to their own learning and self evaluation and for improving literacy and numeracy skills are not provided frequently. Information and communication technology is not used well by teachers and requirements of the



National Curriculum are not fully met. Behaviour in lessons is usually satisfactory and often good, although teachers' strategies to manage some of the larger lower school groups during practical sessions have not yet been developed.

158. Leadership and management are satisfactory, with some good features; there is an ethos of raising standards and improving teaching and learning. The art department works well as a team, showing great enthusiasm for the subject and commitment to helping pupils succeed. Monitoring of pupils' and teachers' work has been identified as an area for further development. Although assessment and the recording of pupils' progress are satisfactory, the tracking of achievement and attainment through the school is not well developed. It could be used more effectively to identify needs, to help raise standards, and to provide evaluation that can be shared with pupils; especially National Curriculum levels in Years 7 to 9, and GCSE assessment criteria in Years 10 and 11. Even though teachers make reference to National Curriculum attainment targets in lessons, and use level descriptors to help pupils' progress, more is needed to show pupils what they need to do, to achieve the higher grades; for example, by illustrating levels and grades with exemplar materials. The curriculum is satisfactory, as a good range of art and design aspects are covered in both two and three dimensions, although sculpture and ceramics work could be beneficially extended.
159. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory, as progress has been made on most of the issues raised. Whole-class teaching is now better, and there is a good balance between group and individual teaching. The department does not have a technician or learning support assistants. Resources for information and communication technology, and staff training, have not been developed well enough to provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to experience computer-aided design or to access the Internet from the art rooms when researching the work and lives of artists.

## CITIZENSHIP

Overall, the quality of provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- The introduction of citizenship as a National Curriculum subject has been well planned.
- Teaching has some strong features and supports classroom relationships.
- Citizenship forms an integral part of pupils' learning experiences.
- Most pupils respond well to the subject and are keen to contribute ideas.

### Areas for improvement

- Monitoring teaching within discrete lessons to ensure that the overall quality is good.
- The attitudes of a minority of pupils in lessons who spoil the learning of other pupils.
- A written policy statement to give greater clarification of citizenship topics within the personal and social education programme needs to be developed.
- Arrangements to assess and monitor pupils' progress need to be developed.

160. Standards at the end of Year 9 and 11 are average. Pupils' knowledge of a wide range of topics is usually sound, and the ideas and opinions, of higher-attaining pupils especially, are often insightful. This was shown by Year 9 pupils in their discussion of whether celebrities have the right to privacy, and by Year 11 pupils in their discussion of topics, such as hunting, in the recent Queen's Speech. Written work usually reflects sound knowledge and understanding of the topics studied, especially in the case of higher-attaining pupils, but work is often rather brief and in particular lacks sufficient explanation. Gifted and talented pupils and those with special educational needs and English as an additional language achieve as well as other pupils. Achievement is satisfactory.
161. Teaching is satisfactory overall with some strong features. Most lesson plans are detailed with clear objectives, and work is well matched to pupils' interests and learning. In the best lessons, topics are well linked to pupils' own experiences. The lesson on the Queen's Speech, for instance, encouraged pupils to explore their own attitudes and actions which may lead to law-making being necessary. This helped them to understand the implications of law-making at both their own personal and national levels. Questioning is often used effectively to check understanding and to

stimulate debate involving all pupils. Learning is well supported by good classroom relationships and in many most cases by good humour and purposeful, yet relaxed, approaches. The great majority of pupils respond very well and are keen to contribute and express their ideas.

162. There are a minority of lessons where teaching is weaker in attracting and sustaining pupils' interest and involvement. This sometimes occurs because lesson planning is not detailed enough in providing a clear focus and structure for learning and ensuring that work is well matched to pupils' learning requirements. These shortcomings result in pupils not understanding the purpose and relevance of the lesson, and becoming increasingly restive and uninterested. Behaviour management is not always strong enough to address ensuing behaviour problems.
163. Pupils' progress and attainment in citizenship is assessed and tracked within school procedures for the assessment of pupils' effort and attainment in personal and social education as a whole. However, these arrangements do not focus specifically on pupils' standards in the subject. Courses do not lead to any form of external accreditation.
164. Provision for citizenship is well led and managed. The subject forms an integral part of pupils' learning experiences. It is a key element of the personal and social education programme, tutorial periods, activities such as assemblies, residential courses, and the annual activities week, and aspects of school daily life such as electing the school council. Long-term planning is detailed and imaginative, resulting in well-conceived programmes of study which are meticulously planned, and support teaching and learning very well. Provision has been recently enhanced as a result of an audit of provision against the national guidelines. This has resulted in additional detailed programmes of work and the comprehensive cover of a wide of appropriate and relevant topics.
165. The programme is very well supported by staff training, and by the use of the Internet and CD-ROMs to support research, and also by contributions from external agencies including the army and prison service, both of which visit the school to lead citizenship lessons, and the local Citizens Advice Bureau, which has recently designed a quiz on citizenship for the school newsletter.
166. The good structures for the systematic review and evaluation of provision lead to further refinement of programmes. However, too little is done to specifically monitor the teaching of citizenship as a discrete subject, and to take action to improve any weaknesses.
167. Consistency in the provision for citizenship is weakened by the lack of a policy statement which clearly defines the distinctive nature of the subject, and expectations for its delivery. It is also weakened by not being clearly defined as a discrete subject within the personal and social education programme, and by insufficient account being taken of the provision made within other subjects such as geography, history, religious education and drama.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in design and technology is **good**.

### Strengths

- Consistently good teaching in all years extends pupils' learning and acquisition of skills.
- Very good attitudes and high levels of interest help pupils learn well.
- The good progress made by pupils in Years 7 to 9 leads to good achievement.
- Very good leadership and management of the head of department is focused on raising standards.

Areas for improvement

- Boys' GCSE results and standards across year groups need to be raised.
- Time limits for pupil activities in lessons are not set by all teachers.
- Planning for systematic and progressive development of design and graphical skills in Years 7 to 9 needs to be implemented.
- Greater use of information and communication technology, including computer-aided design and computer-aided manufacturing, could be made to enhance learning.

168. At the end of Year 9, teacher assessments indicated that standards of attainment in 2002 were slightly above the national average. Inspection evidence indicates that these results are inaccurate and standards were below average. Pupils enter the school with standards well below the average and by the end of Year 9 they are below average, thus progress and achievement are good. However, the proportion of boys achieving Level 5 or above is lower than that of girls.
169. In 2002, the proportion of students obtaining GCSE grades A\* to C was well below average. In 2001, results were average. GCSE results in 2002 were affected adversely by staffing problems when these pupils were in Year 10; this contributed to a significant drop in the proportion of pupils achieving grade A\* to C passes and resulted in unsatisfactory achievement. These staffing problems have now been resolved. Results in the resistant materials course were low; results in graphics were well below average and in food technology below the national average. In all courses, the proportion of pupils achieving A\* to G grades was in line with the national average. The attainment of the boys was significantly below that of the girls. Overall, pupils attained GCSE results that were broadly similar to the levels gained in their other subjects.
170. In the work seen during the inspection, standards at the end of Year 9 are below average. However, inspection evidence shows that pupils make good progress as a result of good teaching. The majority of pupils have strong making skills in a range of materials; these are near to nationally expected levels by the end of Year 9. For example, in a Year 7 food technology lesson, pupils were set the task of designing and making their own sandwich and encouraged to be creative with the fillings they would use. These pupils were confident in their making skills; they demonstrated a good understanding of safe and hygienic working. In a Year 9 lesson, pupils were combining their subject knowledge with their graphical and making skills when building the circuit for an electronic alarm. However, design and graphical skills are not so well developed for the majority of pupils and are much weaker for the middle-attaining boys. The highest-attaining pupils, boys and girls, have a more secure understanding of subject knowledge and their design skills are better developed than those of other pupils. Lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs have greater difficulty with design skills but their making skills are better developed. The standards reached by girls are better than those of the boys.
171. Standards of work seen in the current Year 11 are broadly average, with the higher-attaining pupils working at levels in line with higher GCSE grades. The achievement of these pupils is good, as it is for many of the middle-attaining girls as they build on the foundations laid in Years 7 to 9. Achievement overall in Years 10 and 11 is now satisfactory in relation to the standards attained at the end of Year 9. Practical making is of good quality as pupils handle tools and materials with care and increasing precision. This continues to be the strongest area of the subject for the majority of the pupils, particularly boys of all levels of attainment. For example, in a Year 11 resistant materials lesson, the pupils were producing good quality three-dimensional models as they explored card-modeling techniques, as a means of trying out and communicating their design ideas. Pupils following the graphics products course have the best-developed graphical skills and use a range of techniques and media with care, accuracy and skill. Design skills are broadly average for the middle and higher-attaining girls and the higher-attaining boys. For lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs, practical making skills continue to be better developed than other areas of the subject.
172. Through Years 7 to 9, progress and achievement are good as pupils' design and technology experiences are deepened and broadened. Their attitudes are very good and they are keen and interested to learn in all years. In Years 10 and 11, scrutiny of work showed satisfactory achievement for the majority of pupils, with the higher-attaining pupils making good progress in all aspects of the subject. However, the rate of progress among current pupils is increasing as the

impact of consistently good teaching is having an effect on the standards of work on all courses. In all years, pupils handle tools, equipment, machines and materials with increasing confidence, accuracy and skill and work with due regard for safety and hygiene; they show respect for the materials and resources provided for their use. Graphical communication skills improve over time as pupils use a range of drawing and projection methods to model and communicate their design ideas. Design skills develop less well for middle attaining boys and other lower-attaining pupils, but the higher-attaining pupils make better progress as they research, analyse and evaluate with increasing depth and rigour.

173. Teaching is consistently good and is a strength of the department. Teachers have very high expectations and manage the pupils and the learning very well. Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan their lessons effectively. The work set has appropriate levels of challenge and extends the pupils learning and acquisition of skills. In the lessons observed, teachers used a range of methods and learning activities appropriate to the pupils' level of attainment. For example, in a Year 9 resistant materials lesson, the teacher used her subject knowledge and skills when demonstrating how to create a hollow, bowl shape in copper sheet. At the same time she used explanations to extend their knowledge and understanding, and practical techniques and questioning to test the pupils' prior learning. Such teaching approaches ensure that the pupils learn well and make good progress. Classroom routines are well established and teachers manage pupils' behaviour very well and ensure a good learning atmosphere in lessons. Consequently, pupils' behaviour is very good and levels of concentration are high. Relationships with their teachers are very good and the pupils collaborate and support each other well in lessons. During design and making activities, teachers emphasize key technical vocabulary and basic numeracy and literacy skills are stressed and developed well. In all lessons, teachers give high levels of individual support to the pupils and well-informed feedback encourages them to value their efforts and raise their level of motivation. Teachers always share the aims of the lesson with pupils so that they are aware of what they should achieve, but rarely do teachers review the progress made at the end of the lesson against the aims set at the beginning. It is also rare for the teachers to give pupils time deadlines for the completion of intermediate tasks and this contributes to a loss of pace in learning in some lessons.
174. The leadership and management of the department are very good. The head of department is giving a strong lead to her team and providing clear vision and direction for the further development of the subject. The department development plan is well focused on raising further the levels of achievement of the pupils, and has a manageable number of targets. Teaching and learning are monitored and staff teamwork is very well developed. The assessment system is good and all pupils have targets for improvement in all years. The curriculum meets the requirements of the National Curriculum but the depth of coverage of information and communication technology, including the use of computer-aided design and computer-aided manufacture, is not extensive. In addition, design and graphical communication skills in Years 7 to 9 are not developed systematically enough.
175. Overall, the progress made since the last inspection has been very good. The quality of teaching is now consistently good across the school and behaviour is very good. Levels of attainment in the subject have been raised at the end of Year 9 and at the end of Year 11. The quality of the accommodation has been improved but one food technology room still needs refurbishment to bring it up to the standard of the other rooms in the department.

## GEOGRAPHY

Overall, the quality of provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- Standards are improving as a result of good teaching.
- Teaching is good and is helping pupils to learn well.
- Management of behaviour is very good. Pupils are well behaved in geography lessons.
- The department is well led and managed and has significantly improved standards and teaching.

#### Areas for improvement

- Results of tests and examinations should be at least in line with other subjects.
- Opportunities for pupils to take part in fieldwork activities to improve their understanding of GCSE coursework should be increased.
- Pupils' written work is not well presented and is insufficiently detailed to be useful for revision.
- Marking of pupils' work does not always provide guidance for improvement.
- Use of test and assessment results for tracking pupils' progress and setting targets for improvement needs to be improved.

176. Standards are below average. Year 9 National Curriculum assessment and GCSE results were well below average for the past two years. In 2001, GCSE results showed that pupils did less well in geography than in most other subjects. However, work seen during the inspection shows a clear trend of improvement, especially in Years 7, 8 and 10. Pupils' achievement in National Curriculum assessments and GCSE is satisfactory and is in line with their earlier attainment. Those with special educational needs and gifted and talented pupils achieve as well as other pupils. There is no significant difference overall in the work of boys and girls.
177. Pupils gain sound knowledge and understanding of a range of geographical topics, though the knowledge of higher-attaining pupils is usually more secure than that of most other pupils. Geographical skills develop well especially in map work, forming and testing hypotheses, identifying and collecting information, and making observations and comparisons. The great majority understand and use technical vocabulary accurately. Where improvement in standards is most evident, for example, in a Year 7 lesson on the weather, and a Year 8 lesson on population migration, pupils confidently draw upon their knowledge and skills in categorising, describing and providing clear explanations. Pupils in the Year 8 lesson, for instance, understood and explained clearly the reasons for migration from Mexico to the United States of America, interrelating social and economic factors with an impressive maturity. Numeracy skills are well developed and used confidently in calculation, and in interpreting and presenting data. Information and communication technology skills are also well developed and used well to support enquiry. Standards of written work are weaker and are depressing pupils' achievement. Maps and diagrams are usually clear and accurate but extended writing is not well developed. Even the work of higher-attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11 is often insufficiently detailed and lacking in explanation, and that of many average and lower-attaining pupils is often very brief, reflecting shallow knowledge and understanding, and careless literacy skills.
178. Teaching is good with much that is very good and, in some instances, excellent. The quality of teaching has improved considerably since staffing has stabilized. Pupils' learning benefits from the skilful sharing of the teachers' very good subject knowledge through clear explanation and reinforcement of key points. Brisk, purposeful introductions immediately engage the pupils' attention and interest, and set the pace for continued involvement and concentrated effort throughout the lesson. Activities are well planned, structured and timed. A very good working atmosphere is found in all lessons. Most pupils are positive about their work in geography, responding well to the teachers' very good behaviour management and high expectations for their learning in lessons. Classroom relationships are good and strongly support pupils' personal development. Pupils learn to work accurately as geographers through a constant emphasis on the development of geographical skills. Work is well matched to learning requirements, but large mixed ability classes, together with a lack of classroom assistance, make it very difficult to ensure that all pupils are sufficiently well supported. While the monitoring and guidance of individual and pair work is a particular strength, priority often has to be given to helping lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs, resulting in not enough attention being given to ensuring that higher-attaining pupils are fully challenged.
179. Information and communication technology is used very effectively in supporting learning, and especially in promoting independent investigative skills. Pupils' interest and motivation are increased by the effective use of an interactive white-board to illustrate and clarify explanation, and the regular use of websites to provide access to wide-ranging relevant and up-to-date information. For instance, Year 9 pupils were very interested to find, in their investigation of the protection of endangered species, details of a major oil spillage currently being reported in the media.

Numeracy skills are very well supported through their constant use. Literacy skills are also well supported especially through vocabulary extension, but writing skills need further development.

180. The best teaching challenges pupils to contribute their ideas, and to extend their thinking through searching questioning and incrementally more difficult tasks. These approaches were particularly effective in a Year 10 lesson where pupils responded very well to the challenge to identify the reasons for the development of settlements. However, there are lessons where questioning is insufficiently probing, and learning is less effective because it is too tightly structured, allowing pupils too little opportunity to take initiative, find things out for themselves and learn in depth through discussion.
181. Pupils' work is marked regularly but marking does not always provide detailed, specific guidance for improvement. Assessment procedures have been much improved recently, and provide a secure basis for comparing pupils' attainment with National Curriculum levels and GCSE grades, but assessment results, along with scores reflecting pupils' earlier attainment, are not used sufficiently systematically to track progress and set targets for improvement. The National Curriculum and GCSE syllabus requirements are covered but opportunities for fieldwork are too limited.
182. The enthusiastic leadership and management of the new geography curriculum manager is already resulting in significantly improved standards and teaching. Leadership and management are good. The staffing difficulties which hindered teaching, learning and achievement in recent years have been resolved. Teachers are well qualified and share the curriculum manager's determination to raise standards. All work very closely together in monitoring and reviewing the effectiveness of teaching. Priorities for development are clear and appropriate, and the department is well placed for further significant improvement.
183. Good progress has been made since the last inspection in improving teaching and learning styles, and the use of information and communication technology. More needs to be done in improving standards, written work and field work.

## HISTORY

Overall, the quality of provision in history is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and enthusiasm that encourage a positive learning environment.
- Teachers make effective use of primary source material so that pupils develop a broad range of historical skills.
- Improved preparation for the GCSE examinations is helping pupils to achieve well.
- Lesson objectives are shared with the pupils so they know what they will be learning.

### Areas for improvement

- The marking scheme should be developed so that pupils know how to improve their work.
- Pupils' writing skills should be developed to support their literacy.
- The curriculum needs to be broadened to include a local history experience so that pupils' learning is extended.
- The use of information and communication technology does not support learning as well as it could.
- Schemes of work need to be revised to underpin lesson planning and teaching.

184. Overall, standards are below average at the end of Year 9. Teacher assessments in 2002 were well above average; however, these judgments were too high and were not confirmed by work seen during the inspection. On entry to the school, students' attainment is below average and thus their achievement is satisfactory through Years 7 to 9.
185. GSCE results in 2001 were in line with national standards and were above the average for modern schools. The 2002 results are slightly below those of 2001 but are still broadly in line with national standards. Overall, achievement of pupils at the end of Year 11 is good given their prior attainment

at the end of Year 9. The standard of the current Year 11 confirms that this achievement is being maintained; there is no significant difference between boys and girls. There is also no significant difference in progress for those who are gifted and talented, those with learning difficulties or those with English as an additional language.

186. From work seen during the inspection, standards are below average by the end of Year 9. Pupils have developed a broad range of historical skills, including the interpretation of primary and secondary evidence, the ability to empathise with different situations and the understanding of chronology. Pupils can use a range of learning materials including thematic sheets, pictorial evidence, timelines and writing frames. Year 9 pupils are able to interrogate an Act of Parliament to judge its impact on the lives of people in The First World War and they are able to understand the use of propaganda and censorship during this period.
187. Standards seen during the inspection confirmed that by the end of Year 11 standards are broadly average. Pupils have developed a good understanding of the effects of the Nazi social and economic policies on different groups in German society. They show their ability to make good judgments about policy impact and their note-making is clear and comprehensive. Pupils are able to effectively interpret historical texts and to draw reliable conclusions. They feel secure in their learning and develop their understanding well as a result.
188. Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory; half of the lessons observed were good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are enthusiastic historians. They respect and like pupils and this encourages a positive learning environment. Most pupils work with concentration and show enjoyment in the subject. In good lessons, learning objectives are shared with the pupils, reviewed at the end of the lesson and there is a clear teaching method and progression of learning. Ideas are thoroughly explained, especially in Year 11, and at this stage pupils are carefully prepared with source material for the examination. Teachers provide good opportunities for oral contributions, however there is insufficient emphasis on providing a wider range of writing opportunities both for higher-attaining pupils and for those with special educational needs. Key words and phrases are referred to, but are not systematically reinforced by effective board work or by the use of glossaries. There are limited opportunities for pupils to use numeracy in history although pupils have a good understanding of chronology. Information and communication technology is used infrequently within lessons.
189. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The present head of department has been in post for three months and has made a good start in leading his team of teachers. He has made an effective start in building relationships and departmental meetings are beginning to plan how identified issues can be developed. At present, there is a lack of consistency within the department both for the setting and marking of homework. In particular, teachers' comments do not always both encourage pupils but also give an indication how work can be improved. Assessment procedures are not strong enough to ensure that each unit of work is rigorously assessed and both teachers and pupils have a clear idea about individual pupil progress. Currently there are very limited opportunities for information and communication technology within the curriculum and schemes of work contain very few planned references to its use.
190. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. The quality of teaching has improved, particularly in Years 7 to 9, and this has led to improvements in the pupils' progress. The preparation for the examinations has also been improved. One area of major improvement has been behaviour; pupils' behaviour and attitudes are now good and this supports effective learning. However, there is still no local history experience, few fieldwork opportunities, although some are planned for Years 9 and 10, and the range of information and communication technology opportunities are very limited at present.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

Overall, the quality of provision in information and communication technology is **unsatisfactory**.

#### Strengths

- Basic computing is taught to all non-examination pupils through the nationally-accredited key skills programme.
- Procedures to ensure the pupils' safety when using the Internet are very good.
- Resources have improved since the last inspection

#### Areas for improvement

- Not all aspects of the National Curriculum are taught in Years 10 and 11 and statutory requirements are not met.
- The learning of higher-attaining pupils and those pupils with special educational needs could be better in some lessons.
- At present, the subject is without a curriculum manager and therefore it is not co-ordinated or led well.
- Procedures for monitoring and recording pupils' progress are not securely in place.

191. Overall, standards are below average. In 2002, teacher assessments indicated that two thirds of all Year 9 pupils were at or above the national average for their age. However, this is over-generous. During the inspection, from observations of information and technology lessons and an analysis of the pupils' work, the majority of pupils were seen to be working at or near the national average with a very small proportion who are above this level. This is due to the pupils being taught information and communication technology in discrete lessons with the benefit, until this year, of permanent specialist teachers. Pupils make satisfactory progress from Year 7 and achieve as might be expected given their prior attainment.

192. Until recently, all pupils in Years 10 and 11 were entered for the GCSE examination. Over the last two years, there has been a slight increase in the number of pupils who achieved A\* to C grades and A\* to G grades. In 2002, GCSE results were similar to those of 2001. In 2001, results were below all schools nationally and also below other secondary modern schools. This has led to changes in the curriculum and all pupils in Years 10 and 11 now follow nationally-accredited courses in basic computing skills, with the short course GCSE as a selected examination option in Year 11. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory given their attainment at the end of Year 9 two years earlier.

193. Over time and within lessons, Pupils make satisfactory progress as they rise through the school. A small number of pupils make good progress. In Year 7, they are taught how to remain safe on the Internet, and by the end of Year 9, most pupils use the Internet well in directed research on topics such as planning a school trip to London or researching weather conditions. They make good use of search engines to retrieve information, transferring this into their desktop-publishing brochures. They extend their basic literacy skills using word-processors and template frames to write letters linked to their project, which is good. By the end of Year 9, their desktop publishing skills enable them to produce posters and advertising literature for a range of audiences. They acquire knowledge of spreadsheets, using formulae to enter and amend data accurately. The majority of pupils have a secure understanding of how to prepare and deliver a group presentation using commercial packages such as PowerPoint.

194. Pupils continue to make satisfactory progress through Years 10 and 11. All pupils continue to learn basic computing skills, leading to a key skills certificate in Year 11. In the key skills programme, pupils reinforce their earlier knowledge by examining the range of input devices used by industry, identifying which is the most appropriate to a specific need. The work of pupils taking the GCSE examination is determined by examination requirements. They extend their knowledge of databases and spreadsheets. For example, they prepare and conduct surveys on a range of topics, presenting their findings as graphs, which they later analyse. They take advantage of opportunities to extend their work such as by draft planning, designing and creating a sports day programme. Some pupils also evaluate their work, highlighting how or where it could have been improved. There is evidence in the work of higher-attaining pupils that they make good use of CD-ROMs and the Internet to extend their research and improve the overall quality of their work.



195. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall; a few unsatisfactory lessons were seen. Lessons are generally well planned and teachers are confident in their subject knowledge. In the best lessons, the teacher sets high standards of work and has clear expectations of good behaviour. Pupils respond by engaging well in brainstorming and question and answer sessions, before applying themselves to their practical tasks. They co-operate well together, occasionally provide support for each other and they treat the equipment with respect. However, lessons sometimes lack challenge and on these occasions, pupils quickly become bored and disinterested, which leads to inappropriate behaviour. Furthermore, there are insufficient classroom assistants, which restricts the pace and productivity of lessons. Lesson aims and expectations are clearly explained, but individual needs are not always fully met. For example, where the teachers' vocabulary and use of texts are sometimes beyond the understanding of lower-attaining pupils, this results in a loss of concentration and interest and progress is slow. On occasions, there is insufficient challenge to higher-attaining pupils, who complete the set task ahead of time. English skills and good presentation are well promoted through original writing and design work, some of which is hand-drafted by pupils as homework before being transferred to the computer. Where the teaching is unsatisfactory, this is due mainly to the teachers' inability to cope with disruptive behaviour of a small minority of pupils. Their loud and insolent behaviour and their unwillingness to work impede the learning of their classmates. Unsatisfactory teaching is further heightened by the teachers' failure to plan a flexible lesson which allows for the possibility of equipment failure.
196. The marking of pupils' work is inconsistent. It is satisfactory in the case of examination work, where the teachers' positive and encouraging comments direct the pupils towards further research or improvement. However, it is less evident in the work of other pupils, and teachers do not monitor or record the progress that pupils make.
197. The use of information and communication technology in other subject areas is unsatisfactory. In most areas, the planned use of computers is well integrated into the subject documentation, but in practice it is not used effectively to enhance learning. It is used well to support learning in geography, music and the special educational needs department, and it is occasionally used in English and science. Year 10 pupils following the ASDAN course use information and communication technology well to enhance their topic work. However, it is not evident in most other subjects. Control and measurement techniques are planned for, but there is no evidence to suggest that this is taught, although there is an element of data logging linked to weather studies in geography.
198. At present, the subject does not have a curriculum co-ordinator. Nevertheless, staff have made a good start on developing departmental documentation. There is a good policy and very good procedures to ensure Internet safety; this also involves parental links. However, there are no procedures in place for monitoring and assessing the pupils' progress. This failing within the department has resulted in the inaccurate assessment of pupils' progress at the end of Year 9, and contributes to the teachers' inability to predict pupils' achievement targets at the end of Year 9 and Year 11. Departmental accommodation and resources are satisfactory, with three fully-networked computer suites, plus a small number of computers available in the library and the special needs department. The ratio of computers to pupils is one to six, and these are well maintained by a full time technician. A full time systems manager maintains and attends to the networking system. All staff have completed their government training in using computers to support learning. After-school computer clubs are very well managed and these are well attended by pupils in all years, for their independent research or completing homework.
199. Since the last inspection, improvement has been unsatisfactory. The school is currently without a co-ordinator and not all teachers within the department are permanent specialists of information and communication technology. Resources have improved and full networking has been achieved. The school now has its own web page. However, the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 does not meet statutory requirements and pupils' information and communication technology skills are not developed systematically in subjects across the curriculum. Procedures for monitoring and assessing pupils' progress have not been developed and school targets are not yet set.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Overall, the quality of provision in modern languages is **unsatisfactory**.

### Strengths

- Results have improved significantly in the past year in both French and Spanish.
- Assessment procedures and pupils' knowledge of their own strengths and weaknesses are good.

### Areas for improvement

- There is inconsistency in the quality of teaching, especially in the management of behaviour.
- Boys do not perform as well as they should.
- There are too few opportunities for pupils to practise speaking in class in pairs.

## French and Spanish

200. Standards at the end of Year 9 in both languages are well below average. This represents unsatisfactory achievement, as pupils are not making as much progress as they should. Staffing difficulties have meant that many classes have had several changes of teacher and pupils have made slow progress; some of the current teaching is also poor. The quality of the teaching that pupils receive is variable and so there is significant variation in what different classes and pupils are able to do.

201. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A\* to C in French was below average and in Spanish was well below the national average in the GCSE examination in 2002. These results were, nevertheless, a significant improvement on those attained in 2001, being approximately twice as good as the 2001 figures. A much larger percentage of pupils are entered for Spanish than is nationally the case; the number of pupils entered for French is average. Girls attain significantly better results than boys. Most pupils are entered for the GCSE examination and achieve grades A\* to G. Overall, achievement in Years 10 and 11 is unsatisfactory.

202. All pupils study either French or Spanish in Years 7 to 9; no pupils currently study both languages in Years 10 and 11. In work seen, standards are below average. By the end of Year 9, most pupils understand a range of topics such as descriptions of people and talking about what they did at the weekend. Pupils are taught at least two tenses, however, by the end of Year 9 only a few have a really secure understanding of this and are able to use it for themselves. A significant minority of pupils has difficulty in recalling basic vocabulary and grammatical rules, however, all pupils are beginning to make careful notes, especially on vocabulary, and are encouraged to refer to the notes during lessons.

203. During Years 7 to 9, pupils improve their writing skills in both languages to the point where they can follow a model that they have been given, changing a few details, but most of their writing is short; and for many boys it is not often accurate or well presented. Several boys appear to have done little writing during the key stage and their speaking lacks fluency and is poorly pronounced. There are some notable exceptions to this. In classes where the teaching is good, pupils can, for example, write and talk about a film that they have seen, giving several details, such as who they went with and whether they enjoyed it, without referring to notes. In other classes, pupils are able to hold short conversations but pronunciation and fluency are mostly weak because of a lack of practice and many pupils are reluctant to work from memory. Boys and girls find listening difficult, appear unused to the speed of French or Spanish spoken on the tapes and extract little information. Some pupils, particularly those who have poor teaching, have poor attitudes to learning a language and behave badly, which means they do not make as much progress as they should; they find it difficult to concentrate for the full hour of the lessons. Reading skills are generally not well developed because pupils do not have a textbook each, so they rarely do any reading at home. Higher-attaining pupils make unsatisfactory progress overall because are not often asked to work on extended or imaginative pieces of work. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, especially in writing, because they are given carefully structured tasks.

204. In the work seen during the inspection, standards are below average for French and well below for Spanish by the end of Year 11. This represents an unsatisfactory level of achievement overall. Pupils have not achieved as well as they might because there has been a large turnover in staff and there have, therefore, been problems of continuity. Some staff have problems ensuring that an orderly classroom is maintained. Boys often behave badly in these classes and do not do as much work as they should. In the work seen during the inspection, pupils made some progress in a range of topics such as leading a healthy lifestyle and descriptions of their daily routine but too many pupils could not remember basic vocabulary such as numbers or how to tell the time. Pupils write at greater length for coursework; their work is well presented and reasonably accurate. Higher-attaining pupils do better in Years 10 and than in Years 7 to 9 because they are well prepared for the demands of the GCSE, but their writing still lacks some of the more complex language which would be expected at the higher levels. They often remain content with a bland, correct answer and are not encouraged to use a variety of expressions, linking their phrases with much beyond 'and' or 'because'. Speaking skills are weaker than they should be for most pupils, including the higher-attaining pupils, because they do not practise holding sustained conversations often enough in class. As in Years 7 to 9, pupils continue to find listening to tapes difficult except in the good lessons, when they are given short extracts to listen to and clear guidance from the teacher on how to complete the task. There are too few resources for pupils to practise reading beyond the confines of the textbook and this hinders progress. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, especially in writing, because they are given short, simple tasks and are carefully guided by the teacher.
205. The quality of the teaching is unsatisfactory overall. There is too much variation in the quality of the teaching and, in particular, in the management of behaviour. In very good lessons, teachers plan interesting activities which are well suited to the needs of the pupils; they often prevent misbehaviour by ensuring that pupils are kept occupied all the time. Pupils enjoy the lessons where the activities have been chosen to be of interest to them; for example, they enjoyed learning how to talk about where they live and their pets. They also enjoyed playing language games and competing against each other. The best lessons seen included good, calm beginnings; teachers insisted on silence when something was being explained. This was in marked contrast to a poor lesson where several boys were not silenced at any point and other pupils could not hear the muddled explanations should they have wanted to. Pupils also spent a long time copying out new words without being expected to use them. Generally though, instructions are clear; pupils know what they have to do and get on with the work. Too much of the teaching in weak lessons in Years 7 to 9 is done in English; this does not give pupils the opportunity to hear a good spoken French or Spanish. Speaking in English, coupled by a general inattention to errors, leads to anglicised pronunciation by pupils.
206. Pupils are encouraged to file their work carefully and to use their notes for reference, but they do not have a textbook each to take home, which makes setting homework difficult. Marking of books is adequate although it is not always done regularly. Usually it signals errors but it does not suggest how the work could have been improved, except in the case of the modular work produced for the examination in Years 10 and 11. In Years 7 to 9, nevertheless, pupils have a clear understanding of their strengths and weaknesses, what level they are performing at, and know what they need to do to improve. This is because their performance in tests is discussed with them regularly and they are encouraged to set their own targets, which are commented on by the teachers. In Years 10 and 11, pupils are clear about the examination criteria and what is needed to improve their marks but they occasionally set themselves targets which are too low, so missing out on the top grades. Currently, some information and communication technology is used in lesson time but there is little software available for languages.
207. The head of department has worked very hard to overcome staffing difficulties and to raise standards in the last year. Improvements are now beginning to take place and thus the department is judged to be satisfactorily led and managed. The curriculum is currently under review to address the problem of underachieving boys and staff are committed to working together to reduce the inconsistencies in teaching quality seen in the department.
208. The department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection, results have risen and the assessment of pupils' performance has improved. The recent turnover in staff has meant that

many new initiatives have not had time to be properly implemented; the significant improvement in results in both languages follows a period of greater stability.

## MUSIC

Overall, the quality of provision in music is **good**.

### Strengths

- Teachers' good subject knowledge, planning and high expectations help pupils to learn.
- Good management of pupils means that pupils behave well.
- The large increase in numbers of pupils taking GCSE music.

### Areas for improvement

- Information and communication technology is not used well in Years 7 to 9 to enhance learning.
- Pupils' performance work should be recorded to provide exemplar materials.
- Homework in Years 7 to 9 should be set more frequently to extend pupils' class work.

209. In 2002 teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were in line with the national average; girls' results were better than those for boys. Results in the 2002 GCSE examinations were broadly average for both A\* to C grades and A\* to G grades. This represents good achievement considering that all ability groups, including pupils with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language, are accepted for the music option. Trends over the past three years are difficult to assess because of fluctuating grades and the small numbers of pupils taking the examination.

210. From work seen, standards by the end of Year 9 are in line with the national average; standards are rising due to the recent appointment of an enthusiastic teacher in charge of music. As pupils enter the school in Year 7 with varying musical experiences from many different primary schools, this represents good achievement overall. Pupils improvise, compose, sing and discuss their work in a way that shows learning is improving. Standards for those pupils at the end of Year 11 are in line with national expectations with good progress and satisfactory achievement taking place due to the high levels of commitment by pupils. Because of the teacher's good planning and high expectations pupils are starting to show more interest in developing their compositions and improving their performance techniques. Pupils with special needs and those who are gifted and talented achieve as well as their peers. There was no significant difference seen in the work of boys and girls.

211. The quality of teaching and learning is good throughout the school. The teacher has good subject knowledge and lessons are well planned, with the aims and objectives clearly set out at the beginning so that pupils know what they have to do. In the most successful lessons, varied activities and confident teaching ensure that pupils are kept on task and remain interested. This was seen in a Year 7 lesson working on vocal and percussion skills. The teacher's careful explanation and clear objectives enabled pupils to sing call and response chants interspersed with bongo drum rhythms. Good use of musical language and key words contributes to pupils' literacy skills. Year 9 pupils improved their singing of 'In nomine pertiae' and through the teacher's constant emphasis on accuracy and dynamics gave an effective performance, showing how three-part singing is being developed. Because of the good teaching, pupils also use their creative ideas to compose music on keyboards inspired by pictures. In another Year 9 lesson, pupils' limited understanding of notation and how to find appropriate keyboard notes restricted their progress. All attainment levels, including talented pupils, pupils with special needs and those who speak English as an additional language, are well catered for and appear to enjoy the lessons. This underlines the inclusive nature of the work taking place and the positive relationships being developed. However, very little homework is set. Whilst keyboards are used regularly in lessons, pupils have limited access to information and communication technology. Work is assessed regularly but the performances are not recorded and this makes it impossible to have exemplar material from the work being done.

212. In Years 10 and 11, the teacher's planning and high expectations are bringing about gradual improvement for all pupils of all levels of attainment. However, Year 10 pupils have been without a

permanent music teacher for much of Year 9 and consequently their basic musical knowledge is limited. This was seen in a lesson where pupils' progress was hampered through lack of compositional techniques and knowledge of the elements of music. Year 11 pupils have a much better grasp of musical conventions and, because of the good teaching taking place, they made good progress when working on compositions using contrasting dance forms. The 25 pupils in this class are keen and able to talk confidently about their work. The increased number of pupils taking GCSE music is an improvement on the last inspection. Many pupils play instruments and have singing lessons and consequently achieve well and make good progress. The inclusive nature of the subject becomes apparent by the standard of work being done by pupils of all levels of attainment, including those with special educational needs. The system of assessment in Years 10 and 11 is done effectively but as yet there is little recording of pupils' work.

213. The recently-appointed music specialist is providing good leadership of the department; she is also the assistant course manager for the performing arts subject area. There are now about 90 pupils learning instruments and having singing lessons, and the choir and orchestra have started again and are well attended. This is a big improvement on the last inspection. The staffing of the department is now stable although there is still a part-time vacancy. A qualified music teacher is joining the department for one day per week to cover this vacancy. Formal monitoring of teaching has taken place by the line manager. The scheme of work covers all programmes of study, examination syllabuses and world music and there is a development plan with achievable targets. School policies are in the handbook but literacy and numeracy are not mentioned. There is only one computer available with software for pupils in Years 10 and 11 to use to support their composing and arranging skills.
214. The department has made good improvement since the last inspection and the accommodation and resources are much better. However, there are insufficient library books to support music.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in physical education is **good**.

### Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good; teachers plan lessons using a range of activities that allows all groups of pupils to learn well.
- Leadership has a strong commitment to improvement and success.
- The very good extra-curricular programme provides opportunities for all pupils to extend their learning.
- Relationships are good and promote good learning well.

### Areas for improvement

- Timetabling arrangements do not allow for the some teachers to teach their groups each week.
- The school is short of useable playing fields in the winter; the all-weather pitch is shared with another school and drainage on the grass pitches remains poor.
- Development of baseline data to judge pupils' standards on entry, at Year 7.

215. At the end of Year 9, teachers' assessments show that standards are average. This was confirmed by work seen during the inspection. In the 2002 sports studies examination, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A\* to C was above the national average and all pupils attained a pass grade. Results in 2002 are considerably higher than those achieved in 2001. There is no significant difference between boys and girls. Higher-attaining students, including the talented, reach high standards in a range of sports, at area, county and sometimes at national levels.
216. Standards in lessons and work seen by Year 9 pupils matched national expectations and showed good improvement from work in Year 7; most pupils are achieving well. They understand basic fitness principles, make effective use of individual skills, space and tactics, in match situations and judge performance accurately. Their knowledge and application of rules are sound. The standards of a small minority are well below average. Their quality of performance in gymnastics is affected by poor body management skills and in badminton, by poor levels of hand-eye co-ordination and spatial awareness. Higher-attaining pupils' work in gymnastics is above average and

demonstrates both creativity and precision. These pupils use refined skills and tactical awareness to consistently outmanoeuvre opponents in badminton and basketball. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated into lessons and make good progress.

217. Standards in lessons and work seen by Year 11 pupils are above nationally expected levels due to good, focused teaching. A significant minority of Year 11 pupils are studying GCSE sports studies; they are on course to reach grades above the national average. Year 11 pupils' achievement is good in relation to their standards at the beginning of Year 10. They use their knowledge of fitness principles to plan training programmes; they apply attacking and defensive concepts to game situations and analyse performance well. GCSE pupils show a sound understanding of the main theoretical aspects and their practical standards are good; written assignments, however, sometimes lack the enhancement of information and communication technology. Lower-attaining pupils show below-average standards of presentation and extended writing skills. Poor compositional and body management skills limit their progress in the aesthetic aspects. Higher-attaining pupils confidently use their information and communication skills to analyse and summarise data; they plan work well, and perform successfully in extra-curricular sport. Most pupils, across all years, show sound numerical skills. They are confident in the use of scoring systems and the measurement and analysis of fitness data. Pupils have good listening skills. They are confident in oral work, but are inconsistent in their use of technical vocabulary. Information and communication technology skills are satisfactory in Years 10 and 11, but are not as developed in other years, due to less opportunity. No significant differences were observed in the standards achieved by boys and girls.
218. The quality of teaching and learning is good in all years. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject are good, which enables pupils to make considerable gains in their understanding of technique, tactics, rules and fitness. This was very evident in a Year 9 badminton lesson where pupils of all different groups made good progress, because the teacher planned work that was appropriate for all levels of attainment. Lower-attaining pupils progressed well, because the teacher modified equipment, simplified tasks and used demonstrations. The learning of higher-attaining pupils, including the talented, is accelerated by extension tasks, grouping and extra-curricular activities. Opportunities for pupils to learn independently are a feature of most lessons. In a Year 11 GCSE practical lesson, pupils planned, monitored and evaluated their personal fitness programmes. Pupils' work showed Internet research and plans to present results using information and communication technology graphics. Their progress in such tasks is good. Learning is less effective in the small proportion of lessons when teaching becomes more prescriptive and pupils are given fewer opportunities to plan and judge performance. A high proportion of pupils co-operates well in group work. Pupils improve their numerical skills through opportunities to measure, record and analyse performance. Teachers are adept in their use of questioning. This improves the speaking and listening skills of pupils across the attainment levels. The subject provides good opportunities for Year 10 and 11 pupils to improve their information and communication technology skills, but chances for younger pupils are more limited. Pupils with special educational needs and those who are talented, make good progress.
219. Leadership and management are good. The curriculum manager has a strong commitment to improvement and success and is ably supported by a dedicated team of specialists. Good procedures are in place to monitor, evaluate and improve standards. Pupils' learning is enhanced by good-quality indoor facilities. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' moral, social and cultural development. However, the curriculum is restricted by poor drainage and some lack of access to the all weather pitch. Current timetabling arrangements are unsatisfactory as some teachers do not always teach the same classes each week; this disrupts pupils' continuity of learning.
220. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. GCSE examination results are now above average; all teaching is by specialists and standards in Years 10 and 11 have risen to above average. Facilities have improved through the addition of the new multi-purpose hall and the astro-turf pitch.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in religious education is **good**.

### Strengths

- The new curriculum manager is developing a shared vision and committed teaching teams.
- Good teaching is characterised by teachers who have good subject knowledge and teach well-planned lessons.
- Pupils make good progress in lessons and achieve well over time.
- A current focus on extending the quantity and quality of resources.

### Areas for improvement

- Writings skills of all pupils, especially boys, need to be improved so that these reflect their oral contributions.
- Assessment criteria need to be linked into specific topics so that pupils' learning can be recorded consistently.
- Marking and homework are not used effectively enough to extend learning.
- Information and communication technology is not used well to support the teaching and learning of religious studies.

221. Standards at the end of Year 9 are in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. This represents good achievement and reflects the good progress that pupils have made over the three years since they entered the school. Pupils with special educational needs and the lower-attaining pupils benefit from the high-quality discussion work and progress well.

222. GCSE results for the 2002 short course examination were below average; these results reflect major staffing difficulties. Results were below those of 2001, when the proportion of pupils obtaining A\* to C grades was in line with the national average for all schools nationally. Boys' results are consistently below those of girls. From the work seen, the current Year 10 and 11 pupils are attaining standards that are close to the national average. Overall, achievement is satisfactory taking into account pupils' attainment at the end of Year 9.

223. Overall, pupils achieve well. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 make good progress in lessons and over time. Year 7 pupils had good recall of a previous lesson. The tightly-structured lesson, with a range of tasks, motivated pupils and they quickly learnt about a variety of crosses and what they represented. Good questioning confirmed and extended understanding. A Year 8 class also remembered their previous lesson well and they could explain how parables teach Christian ideas. The teacher had high expectations of what the pupils could achieve and they responded accordingly. By the end of the lesson, they had an understanding of the Apostles' Creed and had a mature discussion on aspects of the resurrection. As in all Year 7 to 9 classes, pupils' limited literacy skills resulted in written work which was of far poorer quality than their discussions, particularly for boys. Year 9 pupils were engrossed by the teacher's very good use of current examples to introduce a lesson on evil and suffering. They responded well to his good subject knowledge. Pupils listened carefully to exact definitions of morality and the different views of the 'Nature or Nurture' schools of thought. They had begun to apply the ideas to a number of real-life situations. Year 9 pupils reacted well to universal questions of meaning, purpose and values in life. This curriculum is an excellent basis for the short course GCSE course that is taken by all pupils. It allows higher-attaining pupils to be challenged, with pupils ably arguing that "We are what we inherit" and discussing free will. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language also make good progress and participate in lessons well.

224. By the end of Year 11, pupils are able to ponder a number of social and ethical questions, such as conflict and war, within a religious context. Carefully-chosen resources engage their interest. For example, a Year 10 class listened carefully to a current radio debate about racism at football matches. A good discussion followed, with the teacher skilfully focusing the pupils' comments on the lessons learning objectives, including knowledge of Christian teaching. Year 11 pupils considered Old and New Testament teaching on divorce and its relevance to English society. The teacher made good use of the latest divorce figures to ensure their attention and was adept at using ongoing questions to test understanding. Overall, pupils make good progress in lessons and

a scrutiny of the work in their books indicates that they systematically increase their knowledge over time. Pupils benefit from good schemes of work that ensure a brisk pace of learning and time for in-depth revision, but there are too few specific references to religious texts and sources.

225. Teaching is consistently good; no unsatisfactory teaching was seen. The main strengths of teaching are planning, teachers' subject knowledge and good classroom management. Class work is carefully organised so that the learning needs of individual pupils are met. Even though teaching is good and promotes good learning there are some areas that could be improved. Marking is only satisfactory. Teachers tick, and sometimes make comments on work, but pupils are rarely told what they have to do to improve. They not aware of the criteria that determines their grades. Homework is not given consistently and is of variable quality; too many posters and too much drawing are done for homework. There is an insufficient emphasis on tasks that require pupils to read and write at a level befitting their attainment. The teaching of literacy is sound in lessons but is not reinforced in written work and extended writing is not common. Information and communication technology is rarely used in lessons.
226. Overall, pupils' responses are good. Good relationships between teachers and pupils promote pupils' confidence to express views, often of a quite sensitive nature. They react positively to the teachers' careful regard to their need for time to think and respond. Generally, pupils behave in a mature manner and often show empathy with the plight of others. For example, they react with sympathy to bereavement and suffering.
227. Leadership and management are satisfactory and improving rapidly. A new curriculum manager was appointed in September 2002; teachers speak of a renewed vision and purpose. Schemes of work and teaching materials have been written. Non-specialist teachers are finding these most useful. Pupils gain from a more structured approach to assessment, although the criteria have not yet been closely linked to the specific topic being studied. The curriculum enables pupils to develop their spiritual, moral and social education well. Although they study world religions, there are missed opportunities to enhance pupils' deeper awareness of the contribution of ethnic and religious communities to British society.
228. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. There is no longer unsatisfactory teaching. The pace of lessons is now brisk and a range of teaching and learning styles exist. Pupils' attitudes and resources have improved.

#### **Other vocational courses**

229. Business education in Years 10 and 11 was sampled. GCSE business is a popular subject and A\* to C grades, in 2001, were at the national average and were above those of other modern schools. In 2002 similar results were achieved with two pupils achieving an A\* and a further seven pupils achieving an A grade. This represents very good achievement given pupils' attainment at the end of Year 9. Two lessons were observed; both were at least satisfactory. In one, excellent teaching included making very good use of newspaper articles to identify job descriptions and specifications. The teacher set a very high challenge for the pupils and because of these very high expectations pupils made excellent progress in their understanding of the topic. Homework extended pupils' understanding further and on-going assessment was very thorough. Relationships are excellent. The leadership and management of the subject are very good.



**PART E: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM**

In the inspection, nine subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school.

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2001. National comparative data is not yet available for 2002.

**GCE AS level courses**

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
English Literature	1	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	1.00
Mathematics	1	N/a	62	N/a	15	N/a	2.00

**GCE A level and AVCE courses**

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	5	80	96	0	46	3.20	6.57
Drama	7	100	99	14	38	4.86	6.59
English literature	12	100	95	8	37	4.00	5.91
History	4	50	88	0	0	2.50	5.45

**Intermediate vocational qualifications**

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		% gaining distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Business	11	100	86	36	40	36	26
Health and social care	1	N/a	83	N/a	40	N/a	28
Leisure and tourism	4	N/a	84	N/a	42	N/a	21

**SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS**

At present, national data is not available for 2002 to make comparisons with all schools nationally or secondary modern schools.

**MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES**

The focus was on provision for AS-level mathematics and for the GCSE retake course. Work was also sampled in the application of number component of the keys skills course. Here, teaching was very good.

**Mathematics**

Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

#### Strengths

- Teaching meets students' individual needs well; students benefit from clear explanations and good one-to-one support, which helps their learning.
- Where students have sufficient prerequisite knowledge for the course, achievement is at least satisfactory.

#### Areas for improvement

- Students' work is not sufficiently well organised nor sufficiently detailed to provide a secure basis for further study and revision.
- Recruitment and retention rates of students are currently too low to make provision viable.

230. The school offers a course in AS-level mathematics and a GCSE retake course. In recent years, a reasonable number of students have enrolled for both courses, but initial drop-out rates are fairly high. For example, only two of the seven students who started the AS course in September 2002 remain. Students report that they find the gap between GCSE and AS-level work in mathematics difficult to cope with, in spite of good support from teachers. Very few students proceed to an A-level course. AS-level results have varied considerably in recent years; because of the small numbers involved, a national comparison is not valid. In 2001, the one student who was entered attained an A grade and achieved well. Similarly, all five students who were finally entered for GCSE attained a C grade. Their achievement was satisfactory, given their GCSE scores at the start of the course.
231. It is not possible to make firm overall judgements on standards of AS-level work, since only two students are taking the course. However, standards are at least as might be expected at this early stage; students are achieving well. Students have appropriate algebraic skills and sufficient mathematical knowledge to cope with the demands of both the pure mathematics and the statistics modules. For example, students were able to manipulate algebraic expressions quickly and accurately when finding the  $n$ th term of an arithmetic progression. Students make good progress in learning in lessons. However, their written work does not provide a secure enough basis for further study and revision. It is not well organised and there are few detailed notes.
232. Fifteen students are retaking their GCSE mathematics examination. Overall, standards are well below average. Many students started the retake course with lower than usual GCSE grades; their recall of past work is weak. For example, students needed to spend much of a lesson revising how to find the mean of a set of data from a frequency table. They had insufficient prerequisite knowledge to cope with the planned learning for the lesson. Timetabling clashes mean that several cannot attend all lessons. Thus although progress in lessons is often good, achievement over time is likely to be satisfactory at best.
233. Overall, teaching is good. Good knowledge and understanding of the subject, and of the examination curriculum, helps teachers to plan modules of work appropriately. Teachers adapt their teaching very well to meet students' individual needs. They take considerable care to try to 'plug the gaps' in students' knowledge and understanding before starting a new topic. Sometimes, this means that teachers are torn between meeting students' needs and covering the required syllabus. In all lessons, explanations are clear and well structured. In addition, very good one-to-one support is given, which helps to build students' confidence in their ability to succeed. All students spoken to value quality of teaching they receive and the high level of individual support provided by teachers.
234. As in the main school, leadership and management are good. There is again a clear focus on raising standards. In its drive to improve recruitment and retention rates, the department is aware that it needs to achieve a sensible balance between trying to increase the number of students studying the subject and ensuring that students starting the course have a reasonable chance of success. Provision has been maintained since the last inspection.

## ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

The focus was on provision for AS-level design and technology.

### Design and technology

Overall, the quality of provision in design and technology is **good**.

#### Strengths

- Teaching is always at least good, and results in good learning.
- Students have very positive attitudes to their work.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is good and they are deployed well to teach to their specialist strengths.
- Very good leadership and management are provided by the curriculum manager.

#### Areas for improvement

- Students need to use information and communication technology more extensively in all aspects of their work in the subject, including computer-aided design and computer-aided manufacturing.
- Students' experience should be broadened by increasing the links with industry.

235. The GCE A-level results in 2002 were just below the national average. However, numbers are too small to be statistically reliable. In relation to earlier GCSE performance, achievement is satisfactory. All four students who were entered gained pass grades, but not at the highest grades, with three at grade C and one at grade E. These results were higher than those gained in most other A-level subjects in the school. At AS level, nine students took the examination and five are continuing their study of the subject to A level. Of the four students who chose not to continue with their studies in design and technology into Year 13, two achieved grade C and the remaining two have still to have their grades awarded by the examination board, but are expected by the staff to have achieved similar grades. The achievements of male and female students are broadly at similar levels. Retention rates are good.
236. Standards of work seen during the inspection are below but near to the national average. The Year 13 students are maintaining their good progress from GCSE and AS-level courses. In the lessons seen, they make good progress as a result of effective teaching that is well planned, sets high expectations and uses the staff knowledge and expertise available in the department to benefit the students. The students have subject knowledge and specialist vocabulary near to the levels expected. In one lesson they were deepening their knowledge and understanding of design and materials, by analysing the features of a range of electric kettles of different ages. Their making skills are good and they use a range of graphical skills and techniques to develop, communicate and record their design ideas.
237. In Year 12, the students are coming towards the end of their first term of study for the AS-level examination, and are achieving well. They are developing further their design, practical making and graphical skills, and broadening their subject knowledge and understanding. In one lesson the students were learning about 'Total Quality Management' and 'Quality Control'. These concepts were linked by the teacher to the students' designing and making activities, by stressing the importance of specification, research and evaluation to ensure quality products were made. Overall, the students, male and female, are working at levels expected in the early stages of an AS-level course.
238. Teaching is consistently good and consequently students learn well. A significant feature of the teaching is that three teachers are used and deployed to their specialist strengths. Students' learning benefits from this very good provision. Lessons are well planned and have clear objectives that are shared with the students. Teachers have high expectations, provide appropriate resources and the methods used are well matched to the subject material to be taught. Good use is made of small group work and students are encouraged to take an active part in discussions and to ask questions. Very effective support is given to individuals, often including evaluative comments aimed at raising levels of achievement and the rate of progress. However, teachers do not develop students' independent learning skills at an early enough stage in their course.

239. This good learning is promoted by the very good attitudes of the students towards their work. Students in both years are very attentive and work productively in class. They concentrate very well and respond readily to their teachers' questions. Behaviour was very good or excellent in all the lessons observed. Relationships between the staff and students are very good, and also between students, as they support each very effectively when working together in groups.
240. The leadership and management of the sixth form courses in design and technology are very good. The head of department deploys the teaching team to make the most effective use of their specialist skills and expertise, and teamwork is very well developed. Subject documentation is up to date and the teaching scheme is constantly under review. However, insufficient opportunities are provided for students to undertake visits to local companies and experience first hand, commercial and industrial practices in designing and making. In addition, students are not encouraged enough to use information and communication technology more widely in all aspects of their work, including the use of computer-aided design and computer-aided manufacturing.

## BUSINESS

The focus was on provision for AVCE business education.

### Business education

Overall, the quality of provision in business education is **very good**.

#### Strengths

- Teachers' planning, organisation and expertise are very good and promote good achievement.
- Students' attitudes are very positive and help them to learn well.
- The quality of the independent learning of the students is strong.
- Very effective links have been developed with industry; these enhance students' experiences.
- Assessment is excellent and provides very good support for students' learning.
- The leadership of the department is very good.

#### Areas for improvement

- Access to information and communication technology is limited.
- The accommodation does not provide a business-like environment.
- The overall range of learning resources is not sufficiently broad.

241. The business programmes are popular in the school and students are able to enter the courses with relatively modest GCSE results and then achieve very well. In 2001, the last year of the GNVQ advanced course, the students gained results above the national average, as they had done in the previous two years. Given the overall standard on entry, this represents very good achievement. In 2002, the AVCE advanced double course was successfully introduced and all students achieved an A to E pass grade. One student achieved an AA grade. Taking into account the past examination results, together with the work seen, it suggests that students achieved well. Boys achieved higher results than the girls in 2002. The AVCE single award had too small a cohort to comment against national standards. The GNVQ intermediate award secured a pass rate of above the national average. The all-boys' group achieved a range of all three grades. The work seen in Year 12 and Year 13 indicates that students are working above what could be expected of them and that the high standards previously achieved are being maintained; achievement continues, therefore, to be very good.
242. Students in both Year 12 and Year 13 respond very positively to the vocationally-based courses. For example, Year 12 students are able to analyse three different methods of managing staff appraisal and are confident in working together and sharing ideas. Year 13 students, working in pairs, are able to identify different management development strategies and match them very accurately to case study situations. They are able to link the theory models very effectively with business situations.

243. Teaching is very good and has a positive effect on the students' learning. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and expertise in planning effective lessons. They have high expectations of the students and this contributes strongly to the very good progress throughout the department. With their teachers' support and encouragement, students readily accept responsibility for their own learning and they enjoy the challenge. The pace of the lessons is fast and the students are active participants throughout the whole lesson and learn well as a result. Lively exchanges of ideas are observed and there are very good relationships in every class. Homework is set regularly and is relevant to lessons. For example, in one lesson, homework was used well to further the work on analysing appraisal systems by concentrating on evaluating the best option.
244. There is very good management within the department, with a very strong lead being given to curriculum development and to providing students with quality learning experiences. However, there are some external factors that impinge upon this success. Access to information and communication technology is limited and in two rooms there is no direct provision of computers. The two mobile huts do not provide a suitable or business-like learning environment and do not provide a good model for the world of work. Although the teachers work very hard to provide good case study material and current reference material, the range of textbooks, videos and materials, especially for the optional units, needs to be strengthened.
245. The department received a good report in the last inspection, however there have been further improvements including: developing the GCSE numbers, succeeding in maintaining high standards during a recent period of staffing shortage, building up very extensive links with local industries and successfully introducing the AVCE course with a 100 per cent success rate in 2002. Improvement since the last inspection is therefore good. This success is due in large part to the vision and energy of the head of department. She systematically monitors and evaluates the teaching and takes effective action to secure good learning. The assessment system is rigorous and supports the learning very effectively. It was excellent in the last report and remains so and is a model of good practice within the school. Students are very enthusiastic about the support and guidance that they receive from the teachers and the courses closely match their aspirations for the future. Retention on the different courses is very good. The business department can be seen as strength of the school.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The focus was on provision for AVCE ICT. Work was also sampled in the ICT component of the key skills course. Here, teaching was satisfactory.

### ICT

Overall, the quality of provision in ICT is **satisfactory**.

#### Strengths

- Achievement is good in relation to the prior attainment of the students.
- The subject offers students with a variety of academic backgrounds the opportunity to enter the sixth form and prepare for higher education or employment.
- The sense of a learning partnership that permeates the majority of lessons encourages students to work hard.
- The experienced and specialist staff who give good feedback during lessons, thereby promoting students' understanding.

#### Areas for improvement

- The school has been unable to appoint a curriculum manager and subject leadership is at present unsatisfactory.
- There is not always frequent written assessment of students' work against the specific course criteria and students do not always have an in-depth awareness of how well they are doing.
- There is a lack of rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning for all the sixth form ICT courses.
- There are too few visits and visitors to provide opportunities for students to gain relevant and up-to-date information and experience.

246. There are no recent results for AVCE ICT as the subject was only introduced in 2001. There are very few students taking either the 6 or the 12-unit courses so that judgements against national standards are not reliable. However, the work of students seen in lessons, in their portfolios and in conversations indicates that standards overall are broadly average. There is no significant difference in achievement by gender or ethnicity. An analysis of externally-moderated assignments confirms this judgement. This represents good achievement as students start the courses with below-average attainment.
247. Students make good progress in the vast majority of classes. They do well when using computers to fulfil a specific and focused task. For example, a Year 13 student quickly learnt about system installations and configurations because the teacher was well versed in good practice, such as the importance of using the hardware log correctly. Students benefit from the teacher's insistence that they think for themselves, such as when faced with problems connected with the use correct use of computer codes. Students make good progress when involved in units that focus on their own ability to use software as when designing and starting to create relational databases. They find other aspects of the course more difficult and standards are not so high. At times, their research lacks depth, especially about the use of information and communication technology in real-life commercial settings. The skills of continuous annotation of changes in design and in-depth evaluation were less strongly developed.
248. Students' responses are good. Nearly all show interest and try hard to succeed. Year 13 students, especially, prepare well for lessons. In most classes, there is a sense that the teacher and students are involved in a partnership in learning. Relationships and attitudes are good. Retention rates are good; all but one of the students who left the course in the first year did so because of job opportunities or moves to different parts of the country. Students appreciate the on-going support that they receive in lessons and the willingness of staff, including the technician, to help. They are frustrated by their lack of appropriate access to the Internet.
249. Overall, teaching is satisfactory. In the vast majority of lessons observed, teaching was at least satisfactory and aspects of good teaching were apparent during the week of inspection. The experienced, specialist, teachers have a good command of the subject and communicate this well. These teachers make good use of questioning to check and extend understanding. A particular strength is the teachers' ability to stand back and ensure that students think for themselves. Students comment favourably on the continuous feedback in lessons. They learn more easily as the teacher pinpoints difficulties and highlight areas that need improving. The very small classes enable the teacher to pay close and effective attention to the needs of a range of pupils, including those who enter the sixth form with relatively low examination results and literacy skills. In the odd lesson, a lack of a clear introduction and a focus on the key aspects resulted in unsatisfactory teaching and unsatisfactory learning for students.
250. Due to circumstances beyond the control of the school, there is no curriculum manager and therefore at present, the leadership of the subject is unsatisfactory. Examination courses have recently been introduced and teaching and learning have not been monitored in depth. Students' work is assessed in accordance with board requirements but the whole process lacks finesse. Work is not always formally assessed very early in the course, or the unit, and not all students have a detailed awareness of their progress. Year 12 students have only a limited understanding of the criteria that determine their grade. The department does not give students sufficient opportunities to make direct contact with external organizations and people who use information and communication technology. Students lack access to a good range of textbooks, papers and magazines.

251. No comment can be made on improvement since the previous inspection, as the courses did not exist at that time. Retention rates on the course are good.

## **HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL**

The focus was on provision for AS-level and A-level physical education and AVCE leisure and recreation.

### **Physical education**

Overall, the quality of provision in physical education is **good**.

#### **Strengths**

- Teaching meets students' individual needs well; teachers provide good support and guidance.
- The quality of learning resources, including facilities for practical work, is good.
- The very good extra-curricular programme provides many opportunities for students to extend their learning.

#### **Areas for improvement**

- To increase the number of students following A-level courses.
- Allocation of curricular time for AS-level and A-level courses is low and places pressure on teachers to cover syllabus requirements.

252. The A-level physical education course was introduced last year. It is not possible, however, to make a valid national comparison of students' 2002 AS results, due to the small number involved. The majority of students complete the course and retention rates are good.

253. It is difficult to generalise on standards of work seen in the inspection in Year 13, because only three students are taking the course. However, their work shows good improvement from standards in Year 12; this represents good achievement. Students have a good understanding of the physiological and psychological factors that affect performance and apply these well to practical situations. They have a sound knowledge of most theoretical aspects including global trends in sport and refining performance. Their independent learning skills are satisfactory and they use information and communication technology well to enhance both their learning and written presentation. In a lesson featuring the comparative study of sport in other cultures, students researched information on Australia, including the use of the Internet; they planned PowerPoint presentations and made accurate evaluations. Students handle numerical data satisfactorily and use appropriate technical language, but their extended writing skills are less well developed.

254. In Year 12, overall standards of work seen are in line with national expectations. All seven students started the AS-level course with GCSE grades higher than the national average. Their work shows good improvement since they started the AS-level course in September. Most are developing a sound understanding of the theoretical aspects covered so far; for example, how skill is acquired and the effects of exercise on the cardio-vascular system. Students perform well in their selected individual sports; performances are enhanced by the extension of extra-curricular activities. Most students research, plan and evaluate work adequately; a few are taking time to adjust to the more independent nature of sixth-form study. Students in both years handle number well, they use appropriate technical language, but their extended writing skills are less well developed. There is no significant difference between the work of male and female students.

255. Overall, teaching is good. Teachers are aware of the different ways in which students learn and work hard to provide them with resources that meet their needs. In an A-level lesson, the teacher made very effective use of video recordings, an overhead projector, research sheets and evaluative work, to stimulate students' good learning of different coaching styles. A few students are taking time to adjust to the more independent learning nature of A-level studies; teachers guide them towards a wealth of background information and resources, including Internet addresses, the well-stocked library and the department resource base. Teachers' expectations of students are high, and they respond very positively. Their work is marked regularly and good diagnostic comments ensure that pupils know how to improve.

256. The leadership and management of sixth form physical education are good. A-level courses have been successfully introduced and good procedures are in place to monitor, evaluate and improve standards. Assessment systems are good and used well to monitor students' progress and to set targets. Students' learning is enhanced by access to good resources and accommodation. They have opportunities to improve practical performance levels, through participation in extra-curricular sport and the popular, optional physical education programme. Students often perform well at area, county and sometimes at national levels. At present, the numbers following physical education courses are small and are not conducive to competitive sports or robust discussion and debate. The time allocated for course is lower than normally found and places pressure on students and teachers to cover syllabus requirements.
257. Courses were not offered at the time of the last inspection and therefore improvement cannot be commented on.

### Leisure and recreation

Overall, the quality of provision in leisure and recreation is **very good**.

#### Strengths

- Teachers have very good relationships with students that foster good attitudes to work.
- Students gain good knowledge of leisure, tourism and recreation from visits and work placements.
- Students are encouraged to work independently.

#### Areas for improvement

- Students do not use information and communication technology enough in lessons.
- Some lessons do not provide enough challenge or variety or allow students to develop their written work.

258. Leisure and Tourism is currently run at GNVQ intermediate level in Year 12; 16 students are following this course. Leisure and Recreation is a popular advanced (AVCE) course, with ten students in Year 12 taking the 12-unit course which is equivalent to two A levels.
259. Results in AVCE Leisure and Recreation in 2002 were above average expectations for successful completion of the course, with all of the six students passing. Grades awarded were lower than average but numbers on the courses are too small to make valid national comparisons. In 2001, results were in average; students achieved well to obtain these results given their well below average GCSE results on entry to the course. In the GNVQ intermediate course, the two female students entered achieved the full award and gained merit grades. All of the four students in the current Year 13 AVCE have previously achieved the GNVQ intermediate award, and are expected to achieve well in line and to go on to higher education or jobs in the leisure and recreation industry. Retention rates on courses are good.
260. Current intermediate students are making good progress in lessons and work seen and are likely to attain in line with national averages, and well in line with teachers' expectations based on students' GCSE starting points. Students use the Internet effectively in the library to independently research chosen tourist destinations and get good individual guidance. Boys and girls achieve equally as well as each other.
261. Teaching and learning are good overall. Lessons have several good features. Teachers have very good relationship with his students and these foster students' willingness to learn. At this early stage of the course, students' skills of choosing their own way of working are limited, but they are encouraged to work independently and in groups, and this is helping them to develop good attitudes and interest in their work. Most lessons seen were based on teacher-led discussion. This approach does not always fully engage students in learning. However, a very good AVCE lesson seen involved brief group presentations that allowed full participation by all students. Whilst lesson plans are appropriate, opportunities for students to develop their written work by drafting ideas from paired or group work are insufficient, and use of information and communication technology is not planned to analyse data or produce graphs of trends. The room used for leisure and tourism lacks



computers, and this affects the quality of learning. Higher-attaining students make good use of their own experience in work placements or from part-time jobs to enrich their work. Further development of local leisure links is planned.

262. The subject is led and managed very well overall. The staff team plans to review the schemes of work and the way teaching is organised. The subject has a fairly long history in the school, although it has not run every year. It is not possible to gauge improvement since the last inspection due to insufficient information but leadership provides very good capacity for further improvement.

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

The focus was on provision for AVCE health and social care.

### Health and social care

Overall, the quality of provision in health and social care is very good.

#### Strengths

- Students' achievement is very good resulting in examination results that are in line with those nationally.
- Students use visits and work placements in local healthcare settings very well to develop key skills.
- Teaching is very good; teachers' excellent relationships with students keep them very well motivated.

#### Areas for improvement

- Students do not use information and communication technology enough in lessons to draft reports or analyse health statistics.
- Students do not always evaluate what they have read critically enough.

263. The AVCE courses consist of either six units or 12 units taken over two years. Some units are tested through external examinations. The AVCE course provides students with qualifications for university or the health and social care professions. Most students who start the courses complete them successfully. There is also a GNVQ course in Years 10 and 11; this was not inspected.
264. Standards are average overall but indicate very good achievement from GCSE points scores below, and sometimes well below average. Results for the nine students in the single and double-award AVCE courses in 2002 were in line with the national average for all schools, both for successfully completing course units and quality of work. All students passed: two students obtained a B grade; only one gained a grade below C. This was an improvement from 2001, with students achieving very highly from their GCSE starting points and above teachers' expectations.
265. GNVQ intermediate students successfully completed above the national average in 2001, though the quality of work, shown by the merit and distinction grades obtained, was below average. Students achieved very well from their low GCSE starting points. There were no intermediate students in 2002, but the 14 students currently in Year 12 are attaining in line with national expectations for all schools, and making very good progress in lessons. Retention rates on courses are good.
266. In Year 12 lessons and work seen, intermediate and advanced students present work to a high standard both for quantity of work and quality of careful presentation. They make very good use of information and communication technology to develop key skills even though computers are not always available in lessons. Both intermediate and advanced students link experience from visits to local care settings, such as nursery schools, and work placements very well to theory. Students develop very good communication skills in class presentations and videotaped role-plays. They also constructively analyse their strengths and weaknesses. Students use information and communication technology well to research web sites and present work but not enough to analyse health care statistics or evaluate their fitness levels using spreadsheets. Most students

read around topics well in textbooks and newspapers, and plan efficiently, although their critical evaluation of work is often insufficiently detailed.

267. In work seen, Year 13 students analysed practical methods to study volunteer clients, including local infant children and old people. According to witness statements from supervisors, students developed very good relationships with nursery children in classes with which they were helping. Some excellent projects were seen. For example, a higher-attaining student used quantitative and qualitative research methods very effectively to research if adolescents are doing enough to stay healthy. Intermediate GNVQ students, including several lower-attaining students and one with special needs, organised lessons for Year 8 pupils in the dangers of drugs, gaining good social skills. Higher-attaining students evaluated the ethical dilemmas relating to people suffering from anorexia very effectively, and all students developed a good understanding of moral issues facing care workers.
268. Overall, teaching and learning are very good. Teachers' enthusiastic methods create a very positive environment for learning. Their supportive relationships with students, their experience and their good knowledge of local healthcare providers encourage students to share ideas from outside school and to support each other very well in group role-plays. Teachers' very good expertise helped Year 13 students plan methods to present information on their chosen client groups and consider ethical dilemmas. In a very good Year 13 lesson seen, following extensive research from web sites on why people smoke, individual students' action plans were thoroughly discussed. The full coverage of key skills was not co-ordinated well as there were too many teachers teaching intermediates students. Students' work is constructively and regularly marked so they are fully aware of their progress and how to improve.
269. The leadership and management of the subject area are very good. Health and social care lessons are very well managed, considering that several staff are involved. The effective team makes very good use of local care settings to organise one day a week placements for GNVQ students; AVCE block placements are planned. Teachers track students' progress very rigorously and examination board reports confirm the excellent quality of marking and feedback to students. Students are prepared well for higher education and careers in health and social care; students are made fully aware of opportunities available.
270. Improvement since the last inspection has been good and the subject is well placed to improve further.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA**

The focus was on provision for AS and A-level art and design. One lesson of drama and two of theatre studies was also studied. Teaching in these lessons is very good.

### **Art and design**

Overall, the quality of provision in art and design is **satisfactory**.

#### **Strengths**

- Teachers' enthusiasm for their subject, and determination to raise standards.
- The commitment to providing good-quality individual advice and guidance for students.
- Students' good attitudes, and positive working relationships with teachers and peers.

#### Areas for improvement

- Teaching strategies could be broadened to give more attention to detail with projects more closely matched to examination objectives and assessment criteria.
- Students do not always use their study skills well and do not fully accept responsibility for their own learning.
- Course choices, resources, and access to information and communication technology, including computer-aided design, could all be extended to increase learning experiences.

271. The department offers AS and A-level courses in art and design. Overall, standards are below those expected for post-16 students, but student numbers are too low to make any meaningful comparison with national standards. There has been a decline in attainment and the number of students taking the course in recent years. In 2001, four of the five students taking the course passed, but the quality of pass was well below national averages. Four students took the examination in 2002, and three passed. There were no A or B grades. There are three students in the current Year 13, and four in Year 12. Evidence from the inspection confirms that standards overall are below average. However, both groups are making appropriate progress in relation to their prior attainment, and current work indicates average attainment, and satisfactory achievement in relation to students' GCSE grades and predicted results. There is no significant difference in the standards or progress of male or female students.
272. Students are developing a good understanding of diverse materials and concepts. Ideas for projects show initiative, and individual creativity. For example, Year 12 students design and make asymmetrical clay pots for the theme 'vessels'. They base their work on detailed drawings and bold colourful collages of mushrooms, onions and other natural forms. Students use a wide range of media; they understand the properties of various materials, and how to use them. Year 13 use unusual materials including, seeds, pasta, and glass to develop evocative images in the style of Andy Goldsworthy. Their work shows a good understanding of pattern quality and spatial relationships. However, their research, and the documentation of processes and lines of inquiry are less good. Greater reference needs to be made to curriculum specifications and assessment criteria during projects. Study skills and self-evaluation are not well developed. Students do not record their thoughts and feelings about their work or state how they are influenced by art and design movements past and present sufficiently well. However, students speak knowledgeably about their own practical work; they understand, for example, how complementary colours give maximum impact, and how tone is used to convey form.
273. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. Teaching is never less than satisfactory and often good. Individual feedback is always detailed, helpful and prompts improvement. In the best lessons, carefully-prepared resources, clearly-stated aims and objectives and well-communicated subject knowledge result in effective learning. Expectations are good for individual work, but longer-term target-setting lacks sharp control. Students do not receive enough information on how examination requirements and assessment criteria are to be achieved. The assessment of work is satisfactory at an individual level, but the recording of achievement and progress is insufficiently co-ordinated across the shared teaching groups. Students are very enthusiastic and have positive attitudes and would benefit from greater encouragement to take more responsibility for their own learning. Insufficient use is made of information and communication technology for research, and for developing designs. Course assignments involve some links to other educational establishments and outside agencies; these need strengthening through integrated projects, both above and below sixth-form level.
274. The courses are well led and adequately managed. Teamwork is good, and students benefit from the range of expertise and interests of teachers. At the time of the last inspection there were no sixth-form art courses. Department and school development plans identify the main areas for improvement. These are to extend the experiences and opportunities available to students by the further development of staffing and learning resources, particularly computer resources and to improve the accommodation as, currently, post-16 students do not have a separate room for work in progress. There are plans to explore the viability of offering an advanced vocational course, and to provide staff training for this. Retention rates on courses are good.

## HUMANITIES

One lesson each of geography and history were sampled. Teaching was satisfactory in geography and good in history.

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus was on provision for AS and A-level English literature.

### English literature

Overall, the quality of provision in English literature is **good**.

#### Strengths

- Very systematic and encouraging teaching ensures that all students achieve well.
- Very good support and guidance through marking, assessment and individual help.

#### Areas for improvement

- Higher expectation of student participation and taking responsibility for their own learning, through independent enquiry and research, need to be developed.
- Lesson time should be used more efficiently to ensure that students participate as fully as possible in learning.

275. Standards in English are average. Attainment in A-level and AS-level examinations is below the national average; very few students attain the highest grades. For the last two years, all students have achieved an A-level pass and there has been a steady improvement in results over the last three years. Last year, three fifths of students attained grades A to C. This indicates that achievement based on prior attainment is at least satisfactory and students make good progress from Year 12 to Year 13. Far more female students opt for both A-level and AS-level courses than male, but the achievement of male students is as satisfactory. Very few students do not complete their courses and thus retention rates are good.

276. In Year 13, students are able to make a detailed analysis of writers' use of language and show a developing appreciation of literature. They are able to organise and advance a written argument, making good use of textual references. They also maintain a clear personal voice in their writing. Those of average attainment, however, are less able to express themselves precisely and tend to waver between correct literary terminology and colloquial English. Lower-attaining students continue to mis-spell, use vocabulary incorrectly, and sometimes punctuate carelessly. As in the main school, students are willing to develop a point of view orally or sustain an argument when given the opportunity. However, some are not contributing enough to class discussion, or extending prepared presentations beyond a superficial commentary. Year 12 students all show an increasing facility to organise ideas and to structure an argument. Lower-attaining students tend to write descriptively rather than analytically with no real evaluation of a writer's purposes and style. Few students pursue their own lines of enquiry and many do not have sufficient background knowledge of literary conventions and tradition.

277. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and ranges from satisfactory to very good. Teachers recognise that many students have limited knowledge of literary tradition and encourage students to read more widely. For example, in a Year 13 lesson, students benefited from their own research into the First World War and from reading an extract from Siegfried Sassoon's diaries while Year 12 students were encouraged to read critical essays on Shakespeare's comedies. All lessons begin with a discussion of the learning objectives, the projected outcomes and how these relate to the examination assessment objectives. The most effective lessons are carefully structured to ensure a balance between student and teacher input. For example, in a lesson on 'Twelfth Night', the teacher emphasised the need for individual, personal response in the written coursework. After a dramatised reading, students were given time to re-read, reflect and consider a number of questions. They all contributed to the consequent discussion which was thoughtful and showed perceptive understanding of character and motivation. Students were also skilfully directed to consider the dramatist's craft through the teacher asking: 'How does Shakespeare

make you feel like that?' In other lessons, students are prompted to think, for example, by discussing the difference between fate and accident in the context of a novel. They are also shown effective ways of recording their ideas, making notes, highlighting features of the text or using time-lines to plot events in a novel chronologically. Teachers' use of marking is detailed and constructive. Students are all given very clear indications how to improve.

278. Although teachers give good guidance on wider reading, occasionally the teacher tends to dominate and there is not a clear enough expectation of students' independent research. Limited lesson time is not always used efficiently. For example, on two occasions, teachers read extracts or articles to students that they could have read for themselves outside the lesson. Some writing tasks are insufficiently well prepared for students to succeed at their first attempt.
279. Leadership and management of the subject are good. All sixth-form teachers are experienced and well qualified. Students are given good opportunities to visit theatre productions of set plays and other performances but they have few opportunities to mix with other post-16 students, for example at shared lectures.